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Number 93

April 1992

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COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

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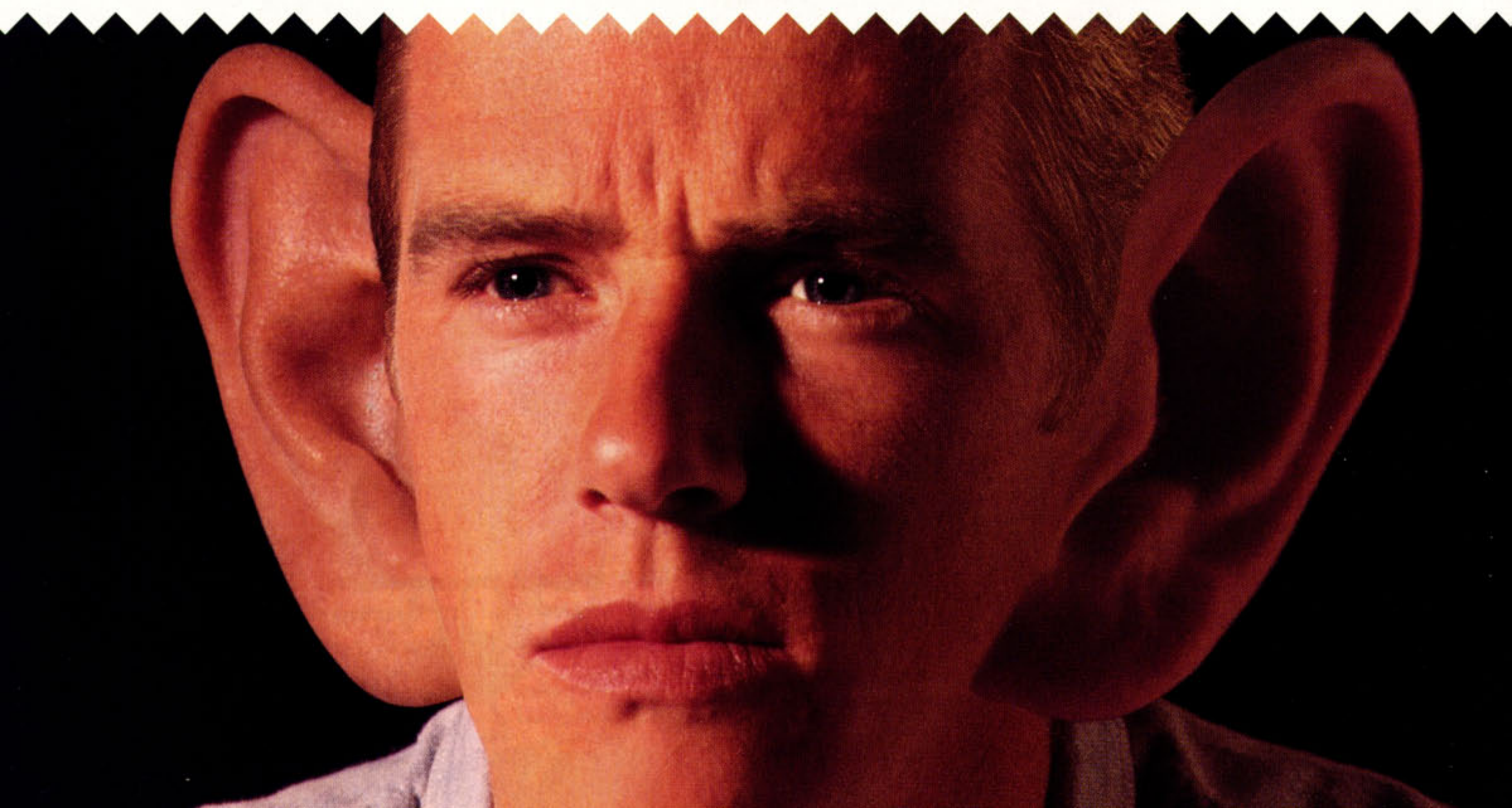
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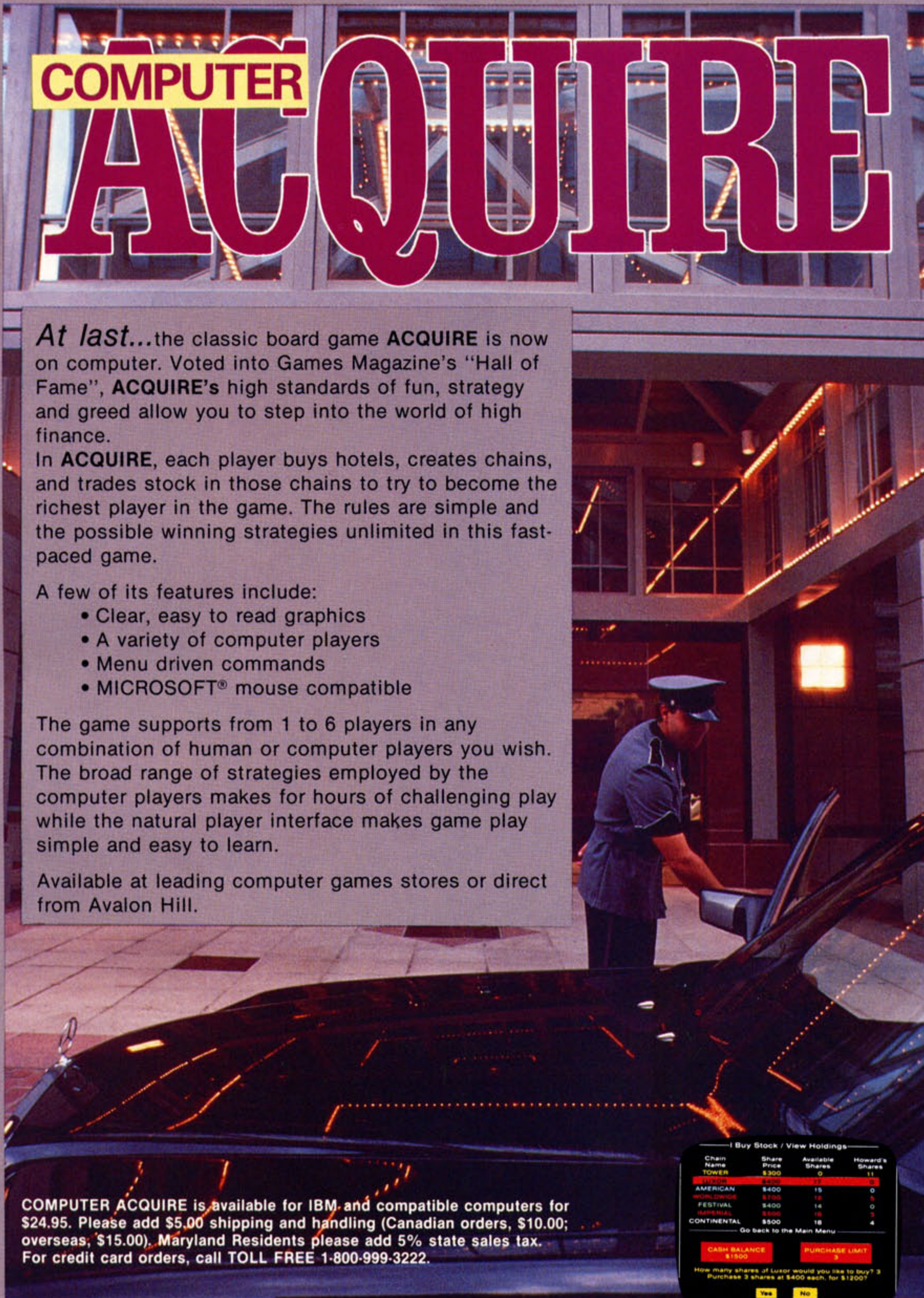
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April 1992 Number 93

Covering the World of Computer Games for Eleven Years

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

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Access
Salt Lake City, UT

LINKS BAY HILL: Yet another in the graphically beautiful course supplements for *Links*, *Links: Bay Hill* offers many especially challenging holes. In fact, because of the steep bunkers in the game, a new GOLF.EXE program has been added which brings the view back closer to the player and creates less awkwardness for this particular shot. IBM ($24.95). Circle Reader Service #1.

Broderbund
Novato, CA

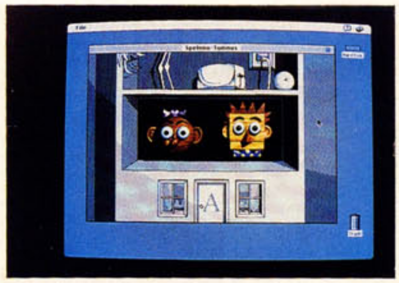
SPELUNX AND THE CAVES OF MR. SEUDO: This "software toybox" is almost a full-blown computerized exploratorium. Youngsters explore caves done in largely black and white Macintosh graphics. As they explore, they encounter lessons about planets, flora, fauna and science on their fascinating journey toward color graphic reward sequences and engrossing animated interludes (which range from the realistic to the surreal). Not only will youngsters be drawn into this product by the sense of exploration (clicking around in the different locations to find new and hidden goodies), but some of it is just so bizarre that they will be compelled to press ahead, just to see what is around the next "bend." Players can even rearrange the cave (map) to suit themselves. IBM ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #2.

Capstone
Miami, FL

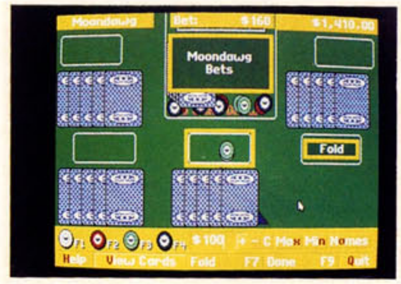
CASINOS OF THE WORLD: If "everything old is new again," here is the software package that strives to prove it. A straight repackaging of three of **Capstone**'s gambling simulations, *Vegas Gambler*, *Monte Carlo Baccarat (Chemin de Fer)* and *The Ultimate Casino Gambling Simulation* (a.k.a. *Trump Castle I*), it combines to include many games of chance in a single package. All together there are many slot games, Blackjack, Keno, Craps, Video Poker and Chemin de Fer (Baccarat).

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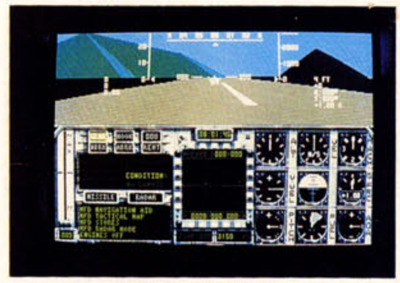
Spelunx & the Caves of Mr. Seudo



Poker



The Taking of Beverly Hills



Birds of Prey



Populous II



Populous World Editor

Well, do you feel lucky? IBM ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #3.

LOTS-O-SLOTS: This add-on disk provides plenty of one-armed bandit action for players of **Capstone**'s gambling games. Nine new slot machine types have been added, including 3-wheel and 5-wheel spinners with cherries, bells, bars, stars, "lucky 7s" and more for regular or progressive play. Fixed with an Atlantic City 83% payback, this supplement can be used with *Trump Castle*, *Trump Castle II*, *Casinos of the World*, *The Big Deal* and *Casino*. Just insert $24.95 into an IBM and pull the mouse or joystick. Circle Service #4.

POKER: Another supplement for the above-mentioned **Capstone** casino games, this one adds a poker room to the East Coast casinos simulated (where poker is not legal). Four games are presented: 5-card draw, 5-card stud, 7-card stud and Texas Hold 'Em. Only five players to a table (although they can all be humans at the same machine), this software creates a nice, if limited, poker playing environment. Still, the stakes are pretty low at $24.95 (IBM). Circle Reader Service #5.

THE TAKING OF BEVERLY HILLS: For those who missed the movie (which, apparently, was almost everyone), this action film has the gilded city of the rich and famous being evacuated by terrorists in police uniforms, the love interest in danger and, along with everything else in the city, a priceless work of art up for grabs. Our hero, football quarterback Boomer Hayes, becomes a one-man anti-terrorist unit out to unravel events and right the situation. This standard adventure game uses plenty of Beverly Hills backgrounds and some digitized pictures from the movie as the players find and use objects to solve the puzzles encountered. A coupon to rent the video free is also included, for those who simply cannot resist seeing the "wealthier than thou" citizens of the famous suburb repeat their role as victims of terrorism or need help in solving puzzles. IBM ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #6.

Electronic Arts
San Mateo, CA

BIRDS OF PREY: Another flight sim package from England, this one features 40 modern aircraft in a dozen different roles and missions. While it is all pretty standard combat flight simulator stuff (with a mix of fighters and bombers), it is clearly targeted away from the hardcore, since every aircraft type shares a single cockpit instrument panel and the action is rough enough that (at least, on machines with 68000 processors) the planes handle clumsily. The campaign scenarios are abstracted into conflicts between fictional countries called A and B, in which the air forces fly NATO and Soviet hardware, respectively. Missions include the likes of long-range bombing, shore/border patrol, supply and troop drops and stealth bombing. While the documentation is about 200 pages long, experienced pilots will be working the controls quickly thanks to the large keyboard summary sheet. Amiga ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #7.

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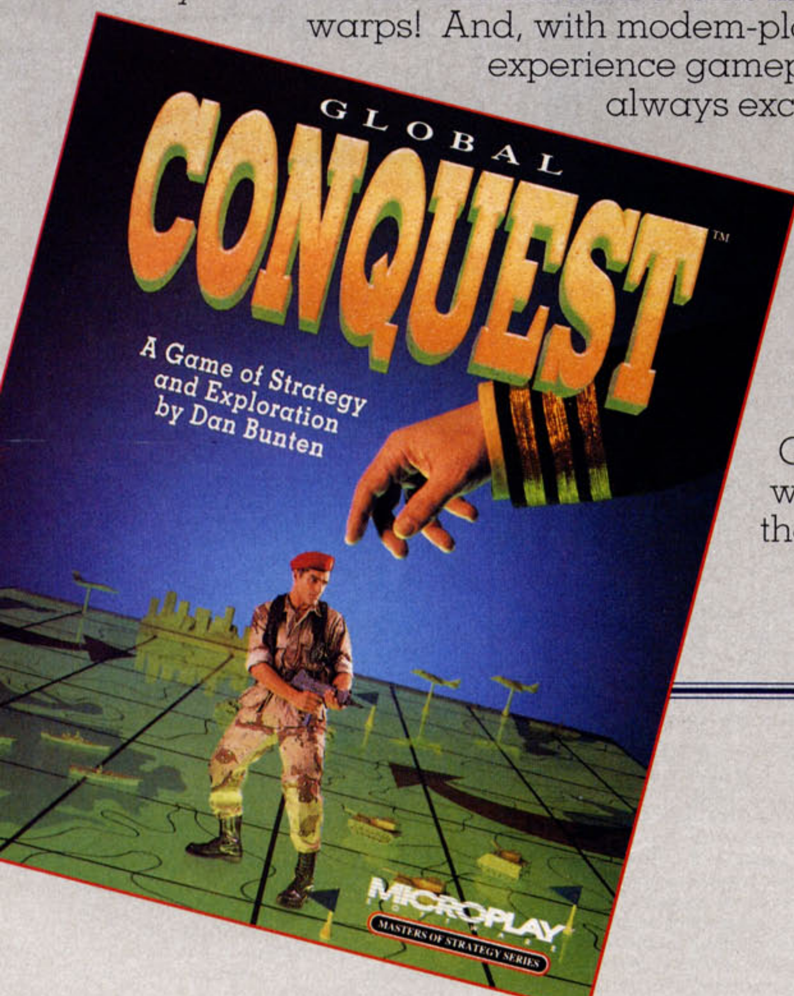




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POPULOUS II: Ye gods! As one of Zeus' many illegitimate offspring, the only way to get the recognition of the Olympians and take one's rightful place in the pantheon is to survive the trials they have in store. With thirty-two of the most powerful gods to best over the fields of classical Greece, it is a good thing this second version of *Populous* allows a player to unleash multiple forces of nature simultaneously. Also new is the feature in which a player "creates" his deity with strengths, weaknesses and a given look. Still, I'm Aesop for these games, and without splitting Heras, it simply can't be "Pan"ned. IBM ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #8.

POPULOUS WORLD EDITOR: For use with the original *Populous*, the premise is that any unimaginative immortal can conquer a world, but it takes a real god to *create* one. Many features become "programmable," including the landscapes (the game includes four new landsets: French Revolution, Space, Fast Food and Wild West) and icons (which use a simple, internal paint/draw program). World sizes can be adjusted, the birth and death rate for houses and castles, the manna rate, native intelligence and much more is subject to player modification. An incredible toolbox for the *Populous* player, now one can *shape* one's own destiny. Amiga ($24.95). Circle Reader Service #9.

Genus Microprogramming
11315 Meadow Lake
Houston, TX 77077
(713) 266-9362

GX GAMES: A part of the *GS Programming Development Series*, this product is to computer gaming what the "Visible V-8" model from Revell was to model building. Five games are included (an *Othello* clone, blackjack, a *Mastermind* clone, a *Galaga* clone and a turn-your-PCX-image-into-a-puzzle game), but more importantly, *so is the source code!* This is to help would-be game programmers get a look "backstage" at the software. The code is completely commented and each game is provided in C, Pascal and Basic. More than just a games package, it could open up the doors to a future in game programming. (Is this how Chris Crawford got started?). IBM ($59.00). Circle Reader Service #10.

Infocom
(from Activision)
P.O. Box 3048
Menlo Park, CA 94025

THE LOST TREASURES OF INFOCOM: See our *Scorpion's Mail* column on page 51 for a complete description of this product. Basically, it's what *real* adventure gamers have all been waiting for! IBM and Macintosh ($69.95). Circle Reader Service #11.

Interplay
Santa Ana, CA

OUT OF THIS WORLD: While this game was not designed out of this world, it *was* made outside this country. This French action/adventure game has a distinctive blend of real-world and science-fiction motifs. This "other-worldliness" is enhanced by very smooth scrolling, polygon-filled, rotoscope-style animation (as seen in so many good flight sims) and a continuous soundtrack replete with digitized sound effects and music. Though wags may say the game has too much copy-protection wheel and too little documentation (two tiny pages), there's still plenty of gameplay there. Amiga received. The upcoming SNES version looks so good that some people at CES



GX Games

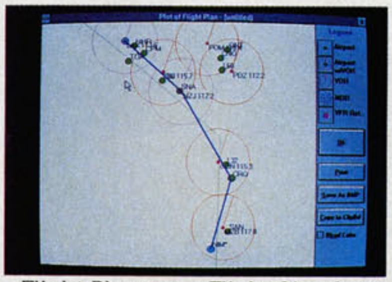

Out of This World



The Simpsons Arcade Game



TMNT: Manhattan Missions


Flight Planner ... Flight Simulator



Creepy Castle

thought it was running on an Amiga. ($59.95). Circle Reader Service #12.

Konami
Buffalo Grove, IL

THE SIMPSONS ARCADE GAME: This conversion of the popular coin-op quarter cruncher is a fairly faithful translation. Eight levels of Groeningesque backgrounds and characters create the bizarre look and feel for this game that Americans have come to love courtesy of the Fox network. For one or two players, using joystick and keyboard, each Simpson has a unique attack method (including character "team attacks," like the Marge and Homer barrel roll) and every level ends with "the big challenge." The game also includes a rules booklet that's written in the same bent style of humor that has made the TV show so popular. (Now, if I could just get the tune of *The Simpsons* theme song to stop playing over and over in my head!) IBM ($39.95). Circle Reader Service #13.

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES: MANHATTAN MISSIONS: In their first action/adventure game designed *exclusively* for computer software, the turtles can now fight in *pairs* as they help the police department (and department of sanitation) clean up the streets of New York. Each turtle possesses unique attributes (and requires development to achieve maximum potential) and players must take them through the 15 missions on the way to Shredder's hideout. With a map of Manhattan and some informational scenes between kicks and chops, there is a bit of a strategy element to go with this mean, green fighting machine-style arcade game. Pass the pizza, dude! IBM ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #14.

Lucasfilm Games
San Rafael, CA

TOUR OF DUTY: P-80 SHOOTING STAR: As for the first aircraft (the P-38 Lightning) in this series of supplements for *Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe*, the *P-80 Shooting Star* includes three flight school missions; eight historical missions; five missions to fly German aircraft against this plane; a tour of duty and a mission builder. Note, however, that *none* of the "Tour of Duty" disks integrate with the *campaign* game in *SWOTL*. Flying America's first successful jet fighter can put a player on an even "plain" with the Me-262 and Me-163 Komet and make hunting the enemy a much easier chore. Straighten up and fly right! IBM ($29.95). Circle Reader Service #15.

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COMPUTE August 1991

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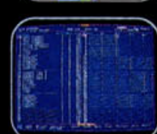
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ACTION STATIONS! SHIPS, SCENARIOS AND UTILITIES DISK: While the title says a lot, there are three utility programs, 28 new ship classes and 13 new scenarios. The utilities include: an easier-to-use scenario editor, an upgrade to the *generate* program and fleet definition program. The new scenarios include both historical and hypothetical battles. *Action Stations!* enthusiasts will go "overboard" for these game supplement disks. IBM (Available direct from RAW Entertainment only for $19.95 + $2.00 shipping and handling [Texas residents add 7.25% sales tax]). Circle Reader Service #17.

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Chicago, IL 60610
(312) 573-0800

CREEPY CASTLE: No, it is *not* a low budget film on videocassette (although it is packed in a standard VHS tape package). Instead, it is a horror-oriented computer arcade game, deliberately presented in low-budget black and white graphics for the Macintosh. From the same people who brought you *Spaceship Warlock* for CD-ROM, this time a mad doctor has kidnapped the heroine and is holed up in Creepy Castle. Guess who gets to save her by emerging victorious from the four scenarios? Macintosh ($39.95). Circle Reader Service #18.

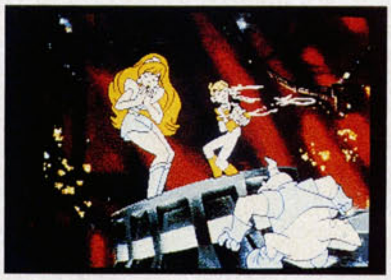
ReadySoft, Inc.
30 Wertheim Court, Unit 2
Richmond Hill, Ontario, Canada L4B 1B9

SLEEPING GODS LIE: How can one help but chuckle when a game promises "4 dimensional role-playing action" and "3 dimensional sound effects" in all seriousness? Still, the one-player-against-the-world role-playing/adventure game (with arcade combat sequences) included in the box takes on the challenge using a flight sim-style polygon-filled environment with some hand-drawn graphics here and there. It was an odd feeling in getting around with the mouse, but eventually, the interface seems natural. IBM ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #19.

SPACE ACE II: BORF'S REVENGE: Won't that blue baddie *ever* give up? Borf's goons used the Infanto Ray to bring him back to his original age (and evil designs). Well, Ace, you're off to rescue sexy Kimberly yet again in a story that offers more of the same along with a few new animations for your amusement. Fast reflexes (and more than 5 MB of hard disk space) are still the ultimate weapon in this graphically intense arcade game. IBM ($59.95). Circle Reader Service #20.

VOLFIED: A conversion of the Taito coin-op hit, this "scroll around and zap" fest requires the modicum of skill necessary to give this reflex-fast game that addictive quality that can cost a player many quarters in the arcade. Each of the sixteen levels ends with a massive "ultimate" alien menace to provide the appropriate nerve-wracking ending en route to the end. With rules written in four languages (on the back of a poster, no less), there are only five paragraphs of non-installation/loading instructions. Zapmasters can probably purchase the game with the quarters they'll save. IBM ($39.95). Circle Reader Service #21.


Sleeping Gods Lie


Space Ace II: Borf's Revenge



Volfied



Ecoquest


Battleset I: Utah Beach — 1944


Operation Sledgehammer

Sierra
Coarsegold, CA

ECOQUEST: The young hero of this adventure game (for ages 10 and up) travels "under the sea" (sans calypso beat) with his dolphin friend in an attempt to find the king of the whales. The thesis of the game is that humankind's evil polluting ways have deranged certain sea creatures. So, in order to put matters right in the game world, the hero must literally clean it up. The game not only expresses its environmental concerns within the game's fiction, but the publisher has been true to those concerns in the entire package. The documentation is even printed on recycled paper with biodegradable soybean ink. IBM ($59.95). Circle Reader Service #22.

Strat-O-Matic Computer Baseball
46 Railroad Plaza
Glen Head, NY 11545
(516) 671-6566

STRAT-O-MATIC COMPUTER BASEBALL: Anyone who doesn't recognize the name **Strat-O-Matic** is probably not a "real" baseball game fan. Since 1961, **Strat-O-Matic** has meant sports games and their large following of boardgame enthusiasts have achieved virtual "cult" status. With their player cards as their hallmark, their computer version uses these same player cards, which are moved about manually on the table. With detailed features like rare plays, individualized balks, wild pitches, passed balls and clutch rules, the detail level is something that only 30+ years of boardgaming refinement could achieve. *Strat-O-Matic Computer Baseball* is a statistical journey into the true minutia of the game. Batter up! IBM. Circle Reader Service #23.

Three-Sixty
Campbell, CA

BATTLESET 1: D-DAY UTAH BEACH — 1944: The first game in their *V for Victory* series, these are truly wargamer's wargames. Using traditional boardgame elements, including a hex grid, unit icons with standard military symbols, movement points, turn-based movement, stacking limits, zones of control and so forth, this one also takes full advantage of its computer host. Easily managing difficult combat, supply and weather calculations, the interface is simple enough to entice any hardcore paper wargamer to computer wargames. Extremely rich in detail, this looks like a new standard in computer wargaming. IBM ($59.95). Circle Reader Service #24.

OPERATION SLEDGEHAMMER: This, the first mission disk for *Megafortress*, was covered in the *CGW* sneak preview, issue #91, page 104. Naval targets in and around the Mideast and Libya are featured in the 25 new missions. With tons of new features, this disk *definitely* teaches the "Old Dog" new tricks! IBM ($34.95). Circle Reader Service #25. **CGW**



RUMORS

● **Accolade** is working on *Hardball III*. Our sources indicate that it is supposed to have more statistical emphasis than earlier games and more emphasis on graphic presentation. An unconfirmed feature is the game's expected compatibility with data files from both *Tony LaRussa Ultimate Baseball* and *Earl Weaver Baseball II*. With as much trouble as *EWBII* had in maintaining compatibility with the earlier *EWB* data disks, astute readers will hold the expectation of the latter feature in abeyance.

● **Simulations Canada** is expected to release two out of the following four games around mid-summer: *Main Battle-Tank: D-Day to Berlin*, the penultimate release in the series; *Sea Power and the State*, modern naval combat *without* having the Soviets as an enemy; *Man of War*, naval warfare in the Age of Sail (which will feature a mouse-driven interface and AI for each individual ship) and *Divine Wind*, grand strategy in the Pacific during WWII.

● Did you know that there are subliminal messages hidden on the cover of the *Leisure Suit Larry 5* box? The Rumor Guy will autograph a bag for any reader who can identify the three words.

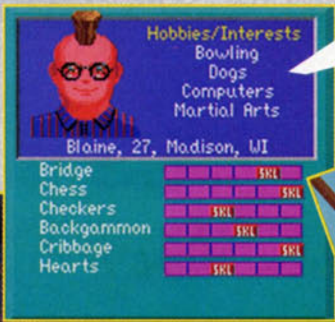
● **Spectrum HoloByte** has postponed publication of *A-10 Avenger*, their next anticipated release in the *Electronic Battlefield Series*, until 1993. The company is expecting to replace the product with an F-18 Hornet simulation that will integrate more easily into the existing *EBS* technology.

● A poll authorized and financed by *CGW* indicates that New Hampshire residents who are unlikely to vote in the upcoming presidential primary prefer the Rumor Guy 83% to 6% over Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton (with 11% undecided) and 17% to 2% over George Bush (with 81% undecided). An independent polling organization refuses to confirm the data purchased by *CGW* and insists that the people of New Hampshire have never heard of the Rumor Guy and the American Interactive Party. According to the independent service, the well-circulated AP wire photos of the Rumor Guy — complete with trademarked bag over his head — on the floor of the House of Representatives provided less name recognition than expected. That source suggested that less than 1% actually supported the Rumor Guy's bid for the Presidency and the most common rationale for the support was to keep him from writing that [expletive deleted] fiction in this column. **CGW**

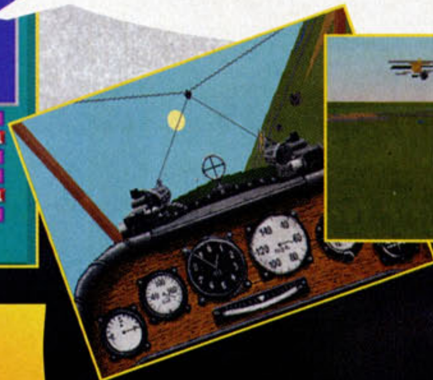


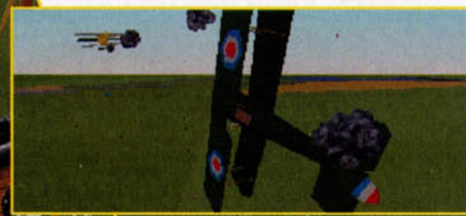


Actual face-maker screens from *TSN*



TOTALLY SEMI -TRUE STORY!





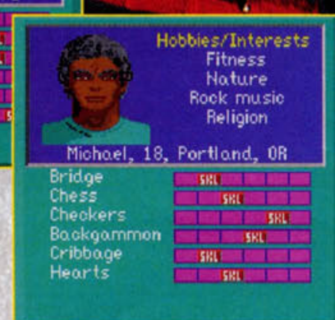
Actual *Red Baron* screens from *TSN*

"Then I shot down the Red Baron somewhere over New Jersey..."

Head-to-Head Aerial Combat is as Close as Your Modem







I'm tellin' ya, it all started with a bridge game. I was on *The Sierra Network* playin' with my regular buds, Rolly, Loretta, and Michael, when Rolly started sayin' how cool New Jersey was, and puttin' down Wisconsin. I knew my only choice was to blow Rolly out of the sky. I challenged him to a game of *Red Baron.* Rolly took off in a Fokker tri-plane, and Michael was right behind him. I was in the air in a flash with Loretta covering my tail. I caught up to Rolly, and we were goin' at it hammer and tongs. Loretta came screamin' in from below, and I was, like, way bummed, because I wanted to blast Rolly myself. But suddenly Rolly pulled a slip-turn, choked his engine, and was all over Loretta like a bad haircut. She was history. It was just me and him. We were in tight, climbin' all the while. That sucker could turn on a dime, but my bi-plane was fast and mean. He almost got me, though. I was chasin' him when he spun around and went for me. Thinkin' fast, I climbed up, like I was runnin' away. He got excited and went for me. I spun hard to the right, and got him in my sights. I punched more holes in him than New Jersey has turnpike exits. I watched him spin out of sight, belchin' smoke and flames. Teach *him* to call me a cheesehead.

NEW FOR SPRING 1992

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Circle Reader Service #67

A Gonzo Look at CES

The Winter Consumer Electronics Show — Part II



Red.

That gaudy color that grabs one by the eyes and pulls a normally perceptive brain into a gravity-free mode of pure adrenalin that says "Danger!" "Excitement!" "Emergency!" "Major Corporate Losses!" or "Here I am in Las Vegas, again!"

The walls were that faded red of disrepair and inattention that looked the same color as my tongue had when I had given myself a bronx cheer in the mirror while shaving this morning. The floor boasted a new carpet that looked like a showgirl trying out a new lipstick that looked more like the purple hue on a *Doors* poster than the sensuous hues one expects to see on her lips. The fact is, the setting matched the uncertain "good news, bad news" state of the industry. We weren't sure whether to scream out that we were on a lucky streak or go into a corner and pound our foreheads into the wall while crying in our losses. Now, *that's* CES!

The truth is that there has been plenty of *red ink* in the entertainment software industry during the last year. **Software Toolworks** had record losses during 1991 and is banking on a *Miracle* (see the article on page 58 of this issue) and a *Mario* to help them improve their profit picture. **Activision** is the updated version of **Mediagenic** as it emerges from Chapter 11 bankruptcy. It has hired **Accolade**'s Peter Doctorow as its new president and moved its corporate headquarters to West Los Angeles in a cost-cutting move.

Data East experienced a major reorganization in its product development area, deciding that almost all of its future development would be done in Japan. As a result, most of its American designers have found jobs elsewhere in the industry. **Lucasfilm Games**, after doubling the number of products every year for four years, reflected on a disappointing Christmas and had the first layoff in the games division's history. Apparently, no major projects will be cancelled, and the approximately 10% reduction in personnel combined layoffs with not rehiring personnel who were finished with previous assignments.

Microprose is in the black after seeing too much red over the initial performance of its coin-op division. Even mighty **Sierra**, still stable and profitable, saw its earnings per share dip (although still remaining respectably in the black) as a result of the **Sierra Network** taking longer to reach the market than originally anticipated.

In the financial world, the analysts pay less attention to *good* profits than they do to the *great* profits that answer the eternal question, "What have you done for us *lately*?" Of the publicly-held software companies, **Electronic Arts** was the only one to sail solidly against the tide of reduced performances. Even that is a mixture of "good news and bad news" for many *CGW* readers, because their phenomenal earnings per share (and resultant rise in share prices) is directly related to the timing of **EA**'s successful assault on the cartridge market.

The unequivocal good news is that the **Software Publishers Association** numbers just released show that software sales are up across the board. Perhaps most hopefully, even the muted fourth-quarter performances of entertainment software publishers may bode well for 1992, because the companies managed to survive when a preponderance of major Christmas releases slipped until early 1992. Retailers believe that those releases will still sell in record numbers. If the companies can get back on track during 1992, this could feasibly be a record year. Of course, *could* is one of those weasel words reserved for financial pages, motivational speeches, congressional testimonies and careful editorial staffs. The following genre summaries, along with the summary of upcoming CRPGs in our last issue, should explain some of the reasons for optimism in 1992.

Red-Lining the Tachometer (Simulations)

Race cars will be one of the hottest areas of competition on the polygon-filled

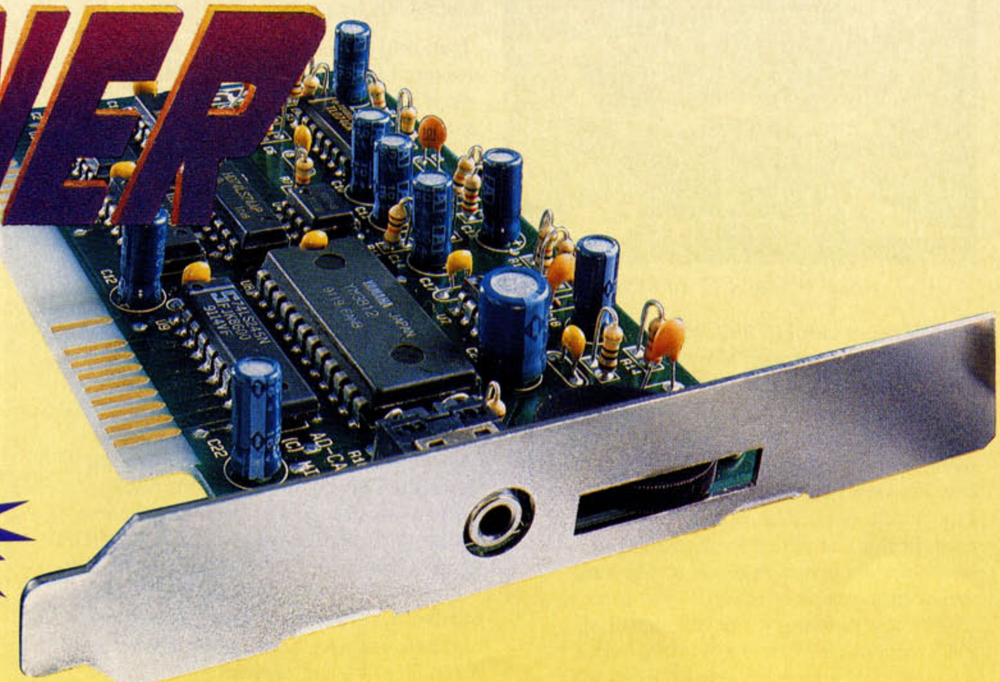


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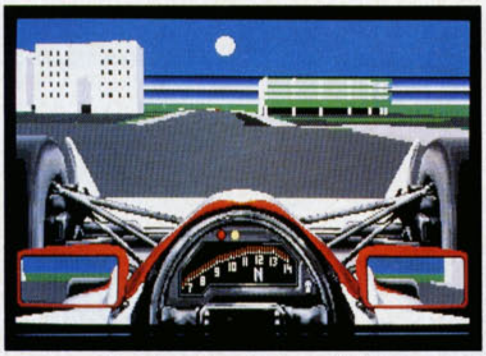
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Circle Reader Service #65



Road & Track Grand Prix

simulation circuit in 1992. **Microprose** will import a European simulation of Formula I racing from their U.K. affiliate. It will be called *World Circuit* and will feature graphics which look like a cross between *Vette!* and *Test Drive 3*, scenery-specific views of the European Grand Prix circuit, twenty-four different racing cars, profiles of actual Formula I drivers and difficulty levels that run from being easier than *Mario Andretti's Racing Challenge* to being more detailed than **EA**'s venerable *Ferrari Formula I*. The game allows drivers to set up their cars from the tires and transmission up to the wing angles. Beginners can have every feature from automatic braking (for curves), automatic transmission, self-correction after each crash and a line on the track to tell drivers where the "groove" or best line is. The game will debut on the Amiga and be followed by an IBM version prior to Christmas.

Electronic Arts and **Accolade** will feature dueling automobile magazine licenses in their polygon-filled racing games. **EA**'s entry is *Car and Driver*. Designed by the designer of the original *Chuck Yeager's Advanced Flight Trainer* product, Ned Lerner, this simulation features ten different cars and ten different "tracks" (some places one would never expect to drive a high-performance car). It also features, as noted last issue, **EA**'s first use of a new graphics mode with twice the pixels, as well as a new joystick routine which **EA** has purchased from Lerner to use in other projects.

Accolade's entry is *Road & Track Grand Prix*, a serious simulation from one of their veteran game designers, Tom Loughery (*Steel Thunder*, *Gunboat* and *Test Drive 3*). Not only does the product feature the capacity for drivers to change gear ratios, wing angles, tires, weight distribution and more, but it will feature two authentic Formula One courses *and* an Architect feature that will allow gamers to move barriers, use tile-based track and contour squares and save their tracks to disk. Most importantly, Loughery is determined to get the physics right so that the cars handle as realistically as possible.

Naturally, the traditional movers and shakers in the genre are still the publishers of flight simulations. As previewed last issue, **Dynamix/Sierra** is readying *Aces of the Pacific*, a World War II Pacific Theater game that advances on their *Red Baron* technology. Naturally, **Microprose** and **Electronic Arts** have flight simulators which are expected to make their maiden voyages in 1992, as well.

Microprose will publish a bomber simulation that was developed by Andy Craven's team at **Vektor Graphix** (*Shuttle*). The working title is *B-17 Flying Fortress* and the game will feature much more than an accurate flight model. Gamers will be able to play every crew position; the entire map of Europe will be used in the campaign game; players will manage crews in a competition in which morale is very important and nose art can be designed, selected or imported (in .LBM files) by the player.

In addition, **Microprose** will combine elements of simulation and adventure in *A.T.A.C.* (Advanced Tactical Air Command). The title of this war-against-drugs game has changed, but the thesis is still the same. The player has been recruited into an elite strike force and is flying his F-22 against the drug plantations, factories, guerilla camps and headquarters of drug cartels.

Electronic Arts is not only converting their *LHX Attack Chopper* for the **Sega Genesis**, but they were putting finishing touches on *Heroes of the 357th* and *Birds of Prey* (both had just shipped at press time). The former is a British product that lets gamers fly a P-51 Mustang for individual missions or a full tour of duty. It also features a replay camera that allows gamers to see the action from a wide variety of angles. *Birds of Prey* is a flight simulation on the Amiga that lets gamers fly 40 different planes (see "Taking a Peek" in this issue).

Mirrorsoft, a familiar name to European computer gamers, is publishing a "Battle of Britain" flight simulation in Europe, and it is coming to America via **Konami**. Entitled *Reach for the Skies*, the game allows computer pilots to fly eight different combat aircraft from World War II.

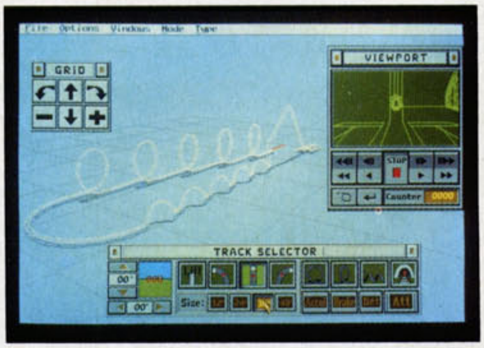
The *new* player in the flight simulation field is **Walt Disney Software**. The company plans to unveil *Stunt Island* during the summer. The product features a campaign game in which players try to win the "Stunt Pilot of the Year" contest and individual "missions" in which pilots can simply fly interesting planes and perform stunt maneuvers. The *real* news is that players will be able to try their hand at directing "movies" in this game and will feature a detailed editor that will allow gamers to perform pre-production, production and post-production tasks as a film director. See the "Sneak Preview" in the June issue of *CGW* for more detailed information.

Disney also plans to open up the simulation market by publishing a simulation that's completely different. *Coaster* is practically a simple CAD program that allows one to design a high-speed roller coaster, test it and "ride it" in a simulated roller coaster experience. *Coaster* might be called "software toy" meets simulation.

Red Team Rising (Strategy)

Gamers who liked *Populous* and *Powermonger* have several treats in store for them during the upcoming year. **Konami** is importing *MEGAloMANIA* from the U.K. It is a real-time strategy game similar to the popular **Bullfrog** games published by **Electronic Arts**, but players can compete in nine different epochs: Caveman, Old Testament, Roman, Norman, Middle Ages, Victorian, World War I, World War II, Modern and the abstract era of the game's title. Like in *Powermonger*, players determine which weapons their societies will build in order to face their enemies in the future.

Another European import with the *Populous* look is *Utopia*. Before mid-summer, **Konami** expects to release this game, which features 10 different planets (i.e. games) in which players try to control construction, finances, industry, defense and population using the icon-driven interface. It looks like *SimCity* meets *Populous* with hostile aliens thrown in as an added obstacle.



Coaster



Utopia

Electronic Arts is importing a different *SimCity*-style game called *Global Effect.* Conservatives will call this the ultimate "Eco-Nazi" game because it has an environmental twist. Players try to build up their cities while their opponents try to destroy the cities environmentally. The game requires both advance planning and damage control. Up to two players can play at the same computer.

Of course, the parents of *SimCity* are not about to default. **Maxis** is translating Japan's famous *A-Train* into a game for the United States market. The game is a fabulous model for showing what the economy *could* be without either the Sherman or Clayton Anti-Trust Acts. Both rail fans and capitalistic megalomaniacs should find themselves easily addicted to this version of *Monopoly* meets *Railroad Tycoon.* Strategy gamers who like network and modem play should be particularly interested in *RoboSport for Windows*, an update of the company's popular Macintosh strategy game that allows human players to compete with each other.

In addition, **Maxis** is working on *SimLife*, an evolution simulator that follows Richard Dawkins' *The Blind Watchmaker* model more closely than James Lovelock's Gaia hypothesis was followed in *SimEarth*. Also, for those who haven't given up on the simple joys of economic management, the company is developing *SimFarm*. The latter is a detailed and user-customizable approach to the agricultural industry.

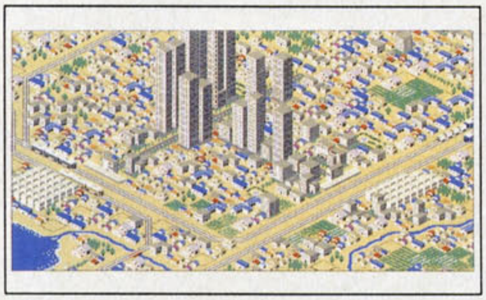
Three-Sixty Pacific is supplementing its line of highly successful wargames with an abstract strategy game called *Theatre of War*. As noted in the last report, it will feature SVGA graphics and stereo sound, as well as some new advances in AI. It is essentially a *Populous*-style interface for a chess-like strategy game in which the action takes place in real time. This one should make modem-to-modem gamers very happy.

Walt Disney Software is introducing a **Buena Vista Software** line that looks very impressive. The first entry is expected to be *Heaven and Earth*, from the creators of *Shanghai* and *Ishido*. *Heaven and Earth* is sort of a zen strategy game with three unique tracks: software toy, puzzles and game. In fact, there is even an "Easter Egg" for anyone who completes the pilgrimage of journeying successfully through all three tracks.

Red-Eyed Monsters (Adventure)

In addition to the British import, *Jekyll and Hyde* from **Palace Software**, that allows three different players to compete against each other when three computers are linked, there were plenty of other adventure games nearing release. Paul Reiche's *Star Control II: The Ur-Quan Masters* is **Accolade**'s sequel to the successful action/strategy game. Now, Reiche and co-designer Fred Ford are attempting to unite game elements in such a way that the adventure portions of the game are resolved by action sequences. Fortunately, the game has a statistical reservoir for alternate resolutions so that non-joystick-oriented gamers can enjoy the game, too.

While still in outer space, there are two new players in the space adventure lineup. **Accolade** is now distributing **Legend** products (*Spellcasting 201*, *Timequest* and others). At CES, **Legend** officially unveiled their science fiction adventure called *Frederick Pohl's Gateway*, based on the HeeChee universe of the novels. As noted in last issue's report, **Legend** is introducing plenty of new technology to their now-familiar line of games. Also, **Microprose** presented a teaser when Bill Stealey announced *Johnny Crash*, a space opera game that will be the company's first graphic adventure. Although the product should be at least a Christmas release, the announcement brought increased awareness of the company's intent to broaden their product line and the technology looks fabulous.



A-Train

Circle Reader Service #62



Theatre of War

Lucasfilm was touting the virtues of their just-released *Secret of Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge* and demonstrating *Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis*, the three-track game (action, puzzle or conversation-oriented) that seemed so marvelous in principle and so difficult to actually produce.

Sierra has plenty of new adventures up their developmental sleeves, but they were only showing work from *Laura Bow II: The Dagger of Amon Ra*. The sequel to *The Colonel's Bequest* takes Laura from the plantations of Louisiana to the flapper-filled world of New York in the '20s. Rather than following the "game as drama" approach of the original, however, it appears that this one is going to be a more challenging mystery to solve. We couldn't pry the subject of Al Lowe's new, non-Larry adventure out of him (we thought it was going to be a comedy western a la John Astin's "Evil Roy Slade," but Al said we were playing a "dead man's hand" in the high-stakes world of computer game rumors), but he did demonstrate the new miniature golf game on **The Sierra Network**. It wasn't technically an adventure game — but it *was* the way *Al* played it. Anyway, with Al's comedic background, we're betting the new game will feature a new comic hero or heroine in an entirely different genre than the Larry games.

Electronic Arts has stayed away from the graphic adventure genre for quite a while. Now it looks like they are ready to give it a whirl with *Holmes*, a graphic adventure with plenty of technological polish to help tell one of the "lost" adventures of Sherlock Holmes.

Red Light, Green Light (Action)

Of course, action games are always present. Some are using cutting-edge technology. For example, **Electronic Arts**' *Michael Jordan: Flight* basketball game uses digitized videotaped images and rotoscoping to get extremely realistic movement in a three-on-three basketball game. **Origin**'s *Strike Commander* still looks impressive with its sophisticated rendering, cinematic visuals and pulse-pounding sound effects. Truthfully, this



SimLife

Circle Reader Service #40

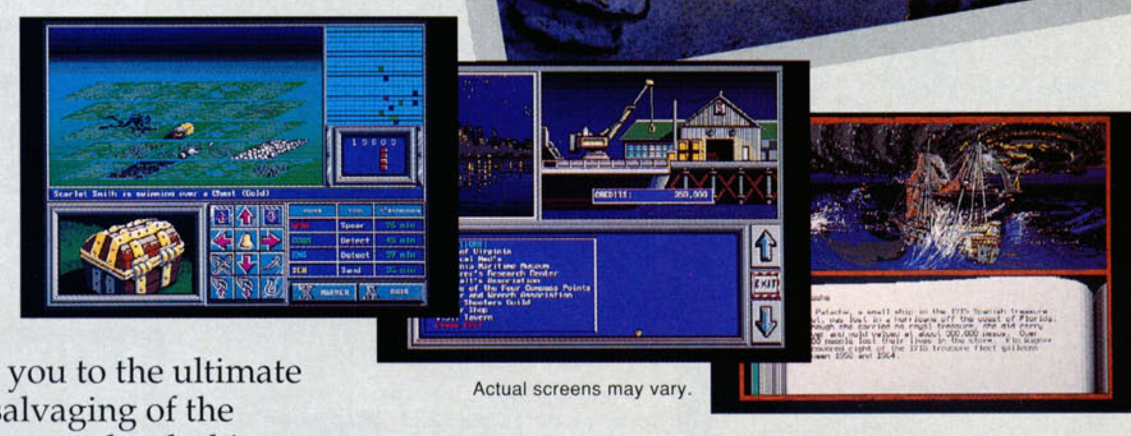
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Circle Reader Service #56



Heaven and Earth

gaming experience may be about as close as anyone can come to portraying the *feel* of the pulp fiction series *Wingman* without actually licensing the characters and universe.

Konami's publishing partner **Renegade** has an entire series of action games that they plan to release over the next few months. Before the end of March, they hope to unveil *Gods*, an action game with puzzle-solving blending in which players take on the role of Hercules and battle their way through three sublevels under each of four "Boss Monster" levels. In *this* game, however, the "Boss Monsters" are equivalent to the four guardians of the secret of immortality. They also plan to release a **Nintendo**-esque children's game called *Magic Pockets* and an action/role-playing game based loosely on the kind of Victorian England gone awry that Sterling and Gibson portrayed in their co-authored best seller, *The Difference Engine*. The role-playing aspects are largely limited to upgrading weapons and abilities, as well as featuring an interface allowing the player to control up to three members of the questing party of six.

Ocean is about to release a space combat fighter simulation that is being developed on the Amiga. It is a mission-based action game with something of the feel of **Rainbird**'s successful *Starglider II* of a few years back. It has a larger galaxy and missions that are more carefully defined and evaluated, however.

In conclusion, most of our readers will be genuinely excited by **Psygnosis**' plans to expand the *Lemmings* line. In addition to *Oh, No! More Lemmings* (see last issue's "Taking a Peek"), the company plans to spread three new *Lemmings* products over the coming year. There will be *Lemmings for Kids* levels that will have been co-designed by educators and child psychologists so that each level teaches specific skills; a *Lemmings Construction Kit* so that gamers can create their own tortures for the cute little guys and *Lemmings 2*, a fourth-quarter release that will feature individual personalities for the lemmings.

Red Alert (Wargames)

In the wake of last year's *Castles*, **Interplay**'s combination strategy, software toy and role-playing game, **Mindcraft** has decided to zero in on one element of medieval warfare, the siege. In *Siege*, players can command troops based on fantasy or history. Two can play (although its potential for connectivity via serial cable or modem has not been determined) at the same computer. The game also features a scenario builder.

Microprose had not only just released *Sid Meier's Civilization* at the time of the show, but they were nearing release on Dan Bunten's new game, *Global Conquest*. As noted in the sneak preview (p. 76 of this issue), *Global Conquest* is a modem game that is about to be released under the **Microplay** label.

Three-Sixty showed screens from their SVGA version of *Harpoon-CD ROM* that is due this summer, but they were not showing any of the work being done on *Patriot*, a Gulf War game being designed in association with **GDW** (Game Designers Workshop), or *Victory At Sea*, a World War II naval game being developed with James F. Dunnigan (author of *Shooting Blanks: War Making That Doesn't Work*). **Three-Sixty** was not the only publisher that was not showing wargames, however, as **Strategic Simulations, Inc.** elected not to show their *Conflict: Korea* game or their new IBM version of *Carrier Strike*. The sequel to *Conflict: Middle East* is expected to be released in the second quarter and the new version of *Carrier Strike* should follow *Conflict: Korea* by a matter of weeks.

Redshirts (Sports)

The name of the game in sports is



Chaos Engine



Jack Nicklaus Signature Golf

bound to be golf. **Access** continues to release lavish course disks for their successful *Links* line of products, but both **Microprose** and **Accolade** are taking aim at them. **Microprose** is releasing an Amiga-based golf game called *Greens*. It will feature four designed courses, 11 different options for different types of competitions, five camera angles that can be adjusted both before and during replays of any given shot and putting that takes the player out of the view so that the line to the hole is never obscured.

Accolade has pulled out all the stops for their *Jack Nicklaus Signature Golf* product. The power bar is now horizontal so that the screen can present a bigger image area; the course architect has been revamped so that gamers can now "Plot and Play" by immediately entering test mode from the architect and features real-time weather. The game is now 256-color VGA and allows gamers to import their own "objects" (bushes, sheds, trees, hills, etc.) into the game.

In other sports, **MicroLeague Sports** has signed a new deal with the *USA Today Sports Network* to allow downloading of up-to-date statistics from the network into their line of statistically-oriented strategy games.

Finally, **Konami** has announced a strategically-oriented *NFL Football* game that enables gamers to create their own custom plays, use actual NFL player statistics and choose between being the coach, a player, general manager or player-coach. As the last game developed by **Distinctive Software, Inc.** (now a division of **Electronic Arts**) for **Konami**, it is expected some time before mid-summer.

Red Only Memory (Conclusion)

Red. The oxygen-toting little bearers that feed my overworked brain cells and jerk my lazy subconscious out of the somnolent brain patterns of a journalist who thinks he's seen it all. Well, I haven't seen it all! My red-rimmed orbs just keep swimming through the hypnotic hoopla that signals that entertainment software is alive and kicking us right in the gut of our technological skepticism. I'll be there. As soon as I catch my breath! **CGW**



Circle Reader Service #30

Circle Reader Service #33

Circle Reader Service #26

Software of

Hero Software Brings Superhero

by Johnny



Superhero comics have a particular appeal to the young male, whether one's idea of young is 8 or 48. Comic book characters are a larger-than-life mythos where titanic powers confront gargantuan problems. When the prototypical young male is younger, feelings of helplessness create a longing for power and being able to identify with a superhero satisfies this need vicariously.

Yet, the contrapuntal harmony to this bestowment of power is the sense of responsibility inherent in the superhero's creed and the awesome struggle with the misuse of power by the supervillain. In a real sense, the comic book mythos is an acculturating influence that teaches the young male that raw power is not a solution to the challenges of life. Rather, it is the creative use of that power that provides the real victories in life. In later life, the comic mythos is a reaffirmation of this lesson to those who, at least temporarily, may feel powerless and disenfranchised. It is a reassuring reminder that victory is possible to those who are creative and flexible upon facing the vicissitudes of life.

What this means is, "Superheroes are *fun*!"

Supercharacters offer a necessary release that lets us soar like Superman, clobber like The Thing, swing like Spider-man, hide like the Invisible Girl, swim like Aquaman, avenge like the Moon Knight and solve mysteries like Batman. Then, they follow up the colorful action sequences with a story that, at least in the best stories, not only teach us about the human frailty that is present in all of us but encourage us to find that inner strength that enables us to overcome that frailty and grasp the heroic.

The trouble is that most computer games have focused on the action and raw power without recognizing the necessity of dealing with the human aspects of the characters and those they encounter. For action aficionados, this has been acceptable. The colorful costumes were present and each superhero had his or her special attack powers. The challenge became that of the gamer and the on-screen character becoming one as they fought off the minions of an evil which could not be veiled by all their colorful supervillain costumes. Yet, previous games have not offered enough for the comic aficionados who love the psychological drama and the story elements of the graphic storytelling art to be found in comic books. They have long yearned for a computer role-playing game based on superhero role-playing. Now, courtesy of **Hero Software** and a publishing partnership with **Konami**, it is *almost* here.

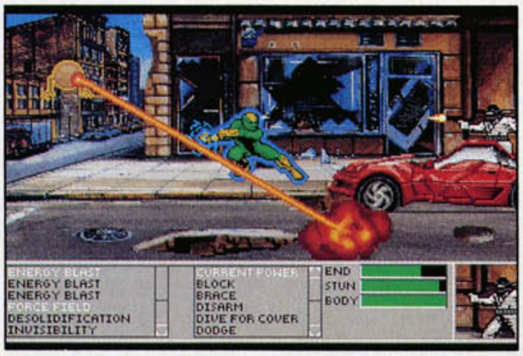
Origins of the *Champions*

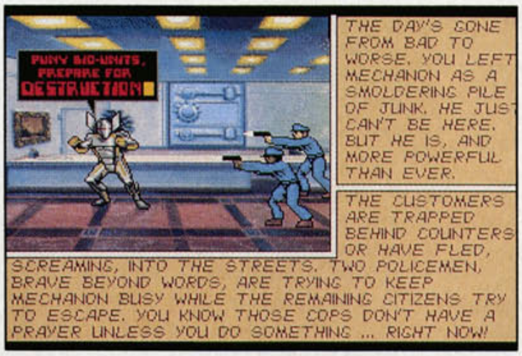
Like most role-playing, the concept of superhero role-playing began in the "people and paper" genre. Students at the University of Indiana at Bloomington created *Superhero 2044*, a role-playing system in which characters created their heroes based on their origin (inventor, scientist, mutation, accident, etc.) and en-

Champions

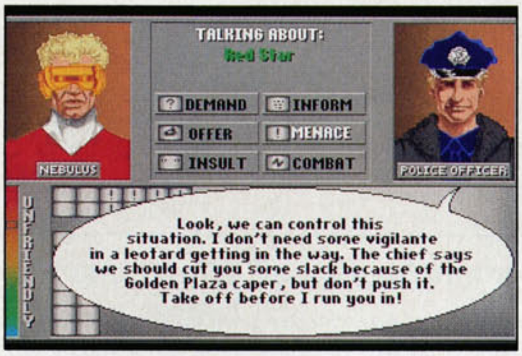
Role-Playing to the Computer

L. Wilson









countered other characters by having the game master (referee) compare the schedule of each superhero and supervillain. The rules were fairly wide-open with regard to hero creation and non-role-players had a difficult time getting started. Another entry into the field was Arizona-based **Fantasy Games Unlimited**'s *Villains & Vigilantes. V&V* offered more assistance in terms of character generation than the earlier game, but its play balance was horrendous in terms of its combat system.

Enter *Champions: The Super Role-Playing Game* by Steve Peterson, George MacDonald and Rob Bell (inspired, some say, by a major home-brew modification of *Superhero 2044*, called *Defenders of Justice*, that was never published). This entry allowed characters to be created using a point system in which all characters start with the same basic number of points and purchase their characteristics, skills, talents, perks and powers. If one runs out of points before building up the superhero to the point at which one desires him or her to be, it is possible to select *Disadvantages* in order to obtain extra points for extra abilities. This enabled role-playing campaigns to be much more balanced, but it required a considerably longer time commitment to character generation. Also, it required a would-be hero or heroine to find a game master who had a campaign world for him/her to adventure within.

Hero Software is currently adapting the successful "people and paper" role-playing game into a computer version. The character generation system is entirely compatible with the familiar role-playing rules. The character generation screen keeps track of extra points generated by taking disadvantages and the number of points remaining after purchasing advantages for the superhero. The only real difference between the printed rules and the system one encounters on the screen is that the disadvantages and perks are merely listed according to their general categories.

For example, Psychological Limitations within the "people and paper" game involve three basic areas: codes of conduct, fears or hatreds and personality traits. Then, all are broken into specific examples (e.g., claustrophobia, agoraphobia, paranoia or racial prejudice). In the computer game, one simply selects Psychological Limitation, its frequency and its intensity rather than creating a full-blown fiction as one would do in the earlier version. Pointwise and combat-wise, it works out the same, but the computer process is streamlined.

Other than the inability to flesh out the *specifics* underlying some of the general disadvantages and perks, the computer version creates a consistent enough *Champions* character that many "people and paper" RPGers will elect to use the "Print" feature to print out characters created for the non-computer version as well as the CRPG.

Beyond this, however, is a jewel of a feature which the "people and paper" genre cannot provide. *Champions* on the computer features a paint program that enables even non-artists to create costumes instantly for their superhero or superheroine and save them to disk. One starts with a palette of more than 32 colors and a flesh-colored figure. By choosing a color and pointing/clicking on the figure, one creates a costume that will be refined and utilized in the combat sequences of the game. Gamers will also be able to design their face masks (if desired), special weapons, special effects for using their powers and special soliloquies (in **Marvel** comics, for example, these are tag lines like "I say thee, nay!" or "It's clobberin' time!"). Once the character generation is completed, it is time to save the character to disk and move into the game.

In the Know

Once the supercharacter enters the game, action is menu-driven until an encounter takes place. The encounter can either be a combat sequence or an interaction (conversation or interrogation). The major difference in the combat found in *Champions*, as opposed to that found in previous games which featured superheroes, is that it does not require versatility with a joystick or perfect timing in order for one to be successful. Combat is mouse-driven and resolved by *Champions* rules. One merely uses a click of the right mouse button to move to the location desired on the combat screen or a click of the left mouse button to attack the current target (seen in the target window on the lower right of the screen). No coordination is needed, because one always attacks the selected target, regardless of where one clicks on the screen. Of course, if one doesn't like the current combat tactics, it is possible to bring up additional options and then to try again.

The major difference between conversational interactions and earlier CRPGs is in the fact that the database is not packed with inane superficial conversation. Both the player's character and the non-player character are presented in the top portion of the screen with on-screen attitude "buttons" in between them and a wall of gray squares representing, potentially, either a barrier to communication (a wall) or a bridge to communication underneath their portraits. The player chooses an attitude with which to approach the NPC in a given conversation by clicking on one of the on-screen buttons. For example, there might be six buttons with six different approaches: comforting, angry, friendly, patronizing, official or unsympathetic.

When the player selects an emotive approach, the screen will either display the gray blocks disappearing toward a *negative* reaction on the left side of the screen or gray blocks being added to form a bridge toward the *positive* reaction on the right side of the screen. If neither side is reached, the process starts all over again with, often, intensified emotive states replacing the original attitudes on the selection buttons. Finally, once one side or another is reached, the conversation is either terminated in an unfruitful manner or the superhero receives some valuable information.

To Be Continued

Another nice touch about **Hero Software**'s *Champions* is its open-endedness. Just as most comic stories seem to be presented as graphic soap operas with plot lines continued from issue to issue, *Champions* will allow characters to continue playing in the game environment *after* the main story is completed (at an estimated 30-40 hours of game play). Beyond this, **Hero** is planning to expand the game's universe by offering additional modules on a regular basis (some written by former **Marvel** and **DC** talents). Of course, like any entertainment endeavor, this depends upon the reception gamers give to the first "issue."

Champions may be one of the surprise CRPG hits that expands the definition of computer role-playing from the predominantly "hack and slash" genre it is currently perceived to be. With its innovations in interface and concern for story, it is likely to be perceived as revolutionary. Of course, what are myths for if they are not to remake the way we think about things? In that sense, *Champions* may very well be considered to be "Super!" **CGW**

"Look What They Done to My Cape!" (Computer Games and Comic Book Heroes)

It was appropriate that one of the first appearances of a comic-book hero on the computer screen was Superman. Just as appropriate was the name of the software company that published it, **First Star Software**, since this was one of the earliest licensed presentations of a costumed vigilante from the mainstream world of comic books. *Superman: The Man of Steel* was also one of the most resold game designs in the industry, since **First Star Software** published the game in the early '80s, **Main Street Software** revived the game in 1987 and **Capstone** repackaged it in 1989. As action games go, *Superman: The Man of Steel* was fairly straightforward. It featured seven levels and managed to migrate from the early Atari 8-bit through Commodore 64 and all the way to the Atari ST and IBM.

Also in 1984, **Marvel Comics** made a deal with Scott Adams' **Adventure International**, in which the latter would produce a series of graphic adventures based on the **Marvel** universe. The games were *hardly* graphic adventures in today's sense, being static pictures with a story driven by the then-standard two-word parser. Most comic fans were disappointed because they felt that the game designs were built around Scott Adams' typical puzzles and did not allow them to play the characters as the characters should have been played.

The next comic "hero" (or possibly, anti-hero) to appear on the computer screen was **Marvel**'s Howard the Duck. **Activision** published *Howard the Duck: Adventure on Volcano Island*. **Activision** seemed to believe that the George Lucas film would guarantee that even the silliest premise would make money. Since the primary thesis of Howard the Duck as a comic book character was the social satire predicated on the reader's awareness of modern philosophy, it seems ludicrous to burden the "Master of Quack Fu" with an adventure that seems more appropriate for David Letterman's "Stupid Pet Tricks."

For a while, it looked like comic book heroes would never make it to the digitized screen again, but Tim Burton's film success with *Batman* brought **Data East** financial success in their 1989 *Batman*, followed by *Batman: The Movie* (both developed by British based developer, **Ocean**). At the same time, **Paragon Software** elected to bring Captain America and Spiderman to the computer with *Dr. Doom's Revenge*. The latter was followed by *X-Men: Madness at Murderworld* and *The Punisher* (perhaps the best combination of action and adventure in a computer game to this point).

Finally, 1991's *The Rocketeer* took the action track once again. Interestingly enough, *The Rocketeer* was made popular in the so-called independent comics, which are sold, largely, to an adult (as opposed to adolescent) audience. One would have thought that a sophisticated role-playing game would have targeted this audience better than the beautifully crafted arcade-style game, but **Walt Disney Software** opted to publish it as the latter.

So, the basic history of comic book heroes appearing in computer games has been heavily weighted toward the action genre. Until *Champions*, no one had sincerely attempted to design a game in which players could assume the roles of their favorite costumed avengers. Now we'll see how well a superhero CRPG is received.

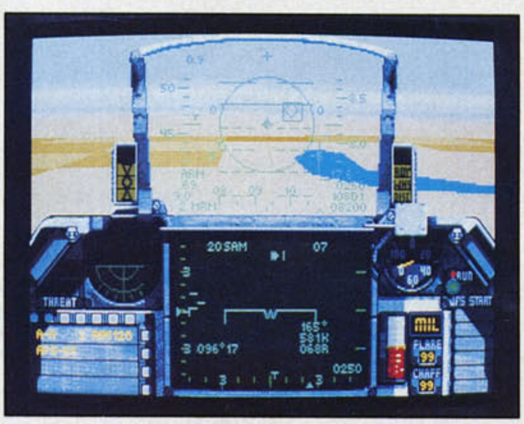


Flight of the Falcon

Spectrum HoloByte's Falcon 3.0

by Doug Fick

TITLE:	Falcon 3.0
SYSTEM:	IBM (386 recommended)
#PLAYERS:	One (Two via modem)
PRICE:	$79.95
DESIGNER:	Gilman Louie
PUBLISHER:	Spectrum HoloByte Alameda, CA



Doug Fick is a pilot with over 1200 hours split between F-16As and F-16Cs. He is a pilot instructor with the Vermont Air National Guard.

Falcon 3.0 is not for the faint of heart, weak of system arcade gamer. Its very design boldly says, "This is the future of flight simulation, keep up or shut up!" It will eat megabytes of hard drive memory, devour expanded memory and demand a fast machine. A 386/20 provides a usable basic setup, but to let the game fly with anything approaching the feel of the real plane finds a 386/33 much more suitable. A math coprocessor will step the flight model to an even higher, more realistic level.

Mission Objectives

With *Falcon 3.0*, the design team set out to "develop the most realistic combat simulator on the market and still make the product playable to the widest range of consumers." To attain this worthwhile goal, they would have to achieve six objectives: 1) develop a highly accurate flight model of the F-16 Fighting Falcon; 2) support this model with state-of-the-art graphics; 3) equip the F-16 with a full and realistic weapons suite, to include air-to-air and air-to-ground ordnance; 4) populate the environment with capable adversaries and allies; 5) make the simulated environment large and flexible enough to support a story line rich enough to bring the computer gamer back repeatedly and finally, 6) write a manual that thoroughly explains the operation and concepts behind the program.

Mission Specifics

Objective 1: The Flight Model — The time spent between *Falcon AT* and *Falcon 3.0* was not time wasted. During this span, **Spectrum HoloByte** worked with **Perceptronics** to develop the *Advanced Situational Awareness Trainer* (*ASAT*) for the military. The experience gained on this project paid off in the programming of *Falcon 3.0*'s flight models. The game provides four different flight models of the F-16, from Simplified to High Fidelity (which requires a math coprocessor).

The simplified model is similar to older versions of *Falcon* in that the aircraft is overpowered. In addition, the easier flight models roll slowly in relation to the real aircraft. They do, however, provide a good starting point to get into the simulation and learn the controls until a more deft feel at the joystick is acquired.

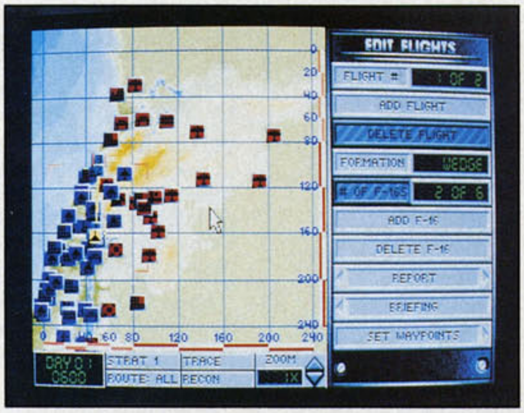
As the player steps up the flight models, the aircraft begins behaving more like the real F-16. Thrust is not as excessive as in the simpler flight models and the roll rate becomes more realistic. One complaint: the actual aircraft does have an impressive maximum roll, but delivers it only with maximum stick pressure. With the higher flight models, the simulation gives the same high roll rate with very little joystick input. This makes fine control a very touchy matter.

Loaded ordnance also affects flight characteristics. A clean air-to-air configured F-16 flies far differently than one loaded wall to wall with fuel tanks and Maverick missiles. Energy bleed off from maneuvering with stores on board is somewhat less than actually seen with the real F-16, but as Spectrum's advertisements say, if it had been any more accurate they'd be in trouble. Overall, *Falcon 3.0* is a very good and accurate portrayal of the F-16. Objective One achieved.

Objective 2: The Graphics — *Falcon 3.0*, like most new programs, requires VGA. In return, it provides excellent depth of field. Allied and adversary aircraft are accurately portrayed in graphics very similar to that found in *Chuck Yeager Air Combat*, but not as detailed as those in *Red Baron*. Ground targets are depicted with commendable precision. In fact, the first time ground troops are seen running from a destroyed bunker, the player will be convinced that there is no detail so small it would not be included in the program. At the highest levels of detail, the terrain scrolls by looking very much like desert or jungle landscapes (depending on the theater of operations portrayed).

Naturally, all this detail has a cost. Slower machines don't have the processing stamina to keep up with the game's demands. As stated earlier, a 386/20 can be considered a baseline system and the game will gladly take whatever it is given beyond that. Objective Two achieved, but at a cost.

Objective 3: Ordnance — Sidewinders, AMRAAMs and the Vulcan are provided to handle various airborne adversaries, while dumb bombs, smart bombs, dumb rockets, smart missiles and



Durandal are provided to let the player pound the ground. This should definitely be enough ordnance to satisfy anyone.

The weapons interface is smoothly handled, as well. Employment of air-to-air missiles, tied with the various flexible viewing modes (the best on the market to date), is especially accurately portrayed. Further, the experience gained on the ASAT program helped push situational awareness to new heights in the product. The padlock view is a model that other simulators will soon strive to emulate. In padlock view, the pilot is able to maintain a tally ho on an engaged bandit (no matter what the bandit's position in relation to his aircraft), then employ ordnance from the same viewing mode once a firing solution is achieved.

As for actually employing missiles, the interface is nearly identical to what has to be done in an actual F-16. The player has to hold the target near the center of the head's-up display (HUD) long enough for the missile to uncage (target) on the bandit.

To defend against the various missile threats, the player is provided with chaff (radar) and flare (infrared) countermeasures. These are very effective and timely use can prevent a long walk home. Of course, one's adversaries are also provided with these countermeasures, so a computer pilot should not be surprised when that $100,000 AIM-9P spears a flare instead of that MiG-29.

Employing the M-61 Vulcan 20mm cannon can be a tricky proposition at the high-fidelity flight model level. The touchy roll rate previously mentioned makes a gun tracking kill a real finesse job. Fortunately, the other flight models are not nearly as sensitive, making the gun much easier to employ. The bottom line is to get very close prior to putting the hammer down.

In air-to-ground ordnance, there is one exception to the ease of employment rule — continuously computed impact point (CCIP) deliveries. When designating a target with this mode in any but the steepest of dive angles, the HUD provides steering cues to fly until the computer calculates the proper release point. Quite often, this release point is never achieved and the computer inhibits releasing the bombs altogether. In the actual aircraft, it is rare to have this "delay cue" prior to bomb release. This delay makes for some very long, predictable bombing runs that ground gunners love.

Falcon 3.0 provides three levels of radar control: Situational Awareness Display (SAD), Situational Awareness Mode (SAM) and High Fidelity Radar (HFR). SAD provides 360 degrees of coverage around the player's aircraft and gives range, relative altitude and relative heading in relation to the player's aircraft. This is the least realistic radar mode and is more akin to an arcade game. SAM covers the same amount of area as the actual aircraft's radar (+ 60 degrees off the aircraft's nose). All radar operations, such as changing radar range scale and lock-ons, are performed automatically by the computer. HFR puts the player in complete control of the radar. Azimuth and elevation coverages as well as changes in range scale are all player-selectable. This is by far the most realistic mode to operate and most rewarding once the controls are mastered. The only way to find a more accurate APG-66 radar model is to go to an F-16 unit and climb into their simulator. Objective Three easily achieved.

Objective 4: Adversaries — There are a total of 17 different adversary and 16 allied aircraft portrayed, ranging from yesterday's news (MiG-19/MiG-21) to deadly aircraft that still have that factory new smell (MiG-29/Su-27). In addition, adversary prowess is user-selectable from hamburger to seasoned killer (actually, novice to ace). Still, this reviewer would like to have seen the enemy artificial intelligence a little tougher at the hardest level. Even at the hardest levels, going against any two enemy aircraft isn't that difficult once the player is familiar with the game.

Surface-to-air missiles are an entirely different story. They seem plenty deadly, made more so by the fact that it is nearly impossible to pick them up visually; the player must rely on the threat warning scope to provide cues. A padlock view, set to allow the player to see incoming missiles, would have been a nice option (this may or may not be realistic, depending on whether the missile motor is still burning and leaving a visible trail or not).

The abilities of wingmen are rated in three separate areas: dogfighting, bombing accuracy and overall flying ability. Such depth of scope is impressive to say the least. Objective Four achieved in admirable fashion.

Objective 5: Story and Environment — One of the biggest complaints players had with the earlier *Falcon* releases was the small playing field. A minute or two of straight line flying brought the player to the edge of the computer world. No more! Three combat theaters (with more scenario disks promised to follow) include: Kuwait, Israel and Panama. The game does not simply offer a piece of these countries, either. They are entire countries plus quite a bit of adjacent territory.

In campaign mode, the scenarios are played as a series of missions performed by the player's squadron. So, one's success or failure will determine the progress of the story (as in *Wing Commander*). This allows the player to act as squadron commander in assigning pilots, number of aircraft and number of flights. In addition, the player will be flight leader of the first element. The story lines are rich and even include home-front news updates on the progress of the war.

Players who are not up for a full campaign have no problem, however; the game throws in half the state of Nevada (otherwise known as the "Red Flag" ranges) for their benefit. The "Red Flag" section allows players to design custom missions from scratch, try new tactics and experiment with various modes before committing to a campaign.

The last mode of play is the Instant Action "Player against the World" mode. Without a doubt, this is where the new pilot should begin. This mode allows the gamer to jump right in with minimal preparation and take the program for a test flight. Here, ordnance is unlimited and everything out there is hostile. Yes, the world is plenty big. Count Objective Five a success.

Objective 6: Documentation — The 342-page manual is more than up to the task of taking the player step by step through each nuance of the game. There is even an excellent primer on Advanced Fighter Tactics to give players a greater understanding of what fighter pilots do and why they do it. Indeed, Objective Six is fulfilled.

Mission Discrepancies

The one mode of play with, perhaps, the most potential and *definitely* the most bugs is modem play. As it currently stands (under the *Falcon 3.0a* update), modem hook-up time is excessive, from three and a half minutes to over ten, depending on type of scenario, modem and computer. To the design team's credit, the program is passing a tremendous amount of information between machines, but this reviewer would certainly like to see them reduce this amount of time.

In addition, flight is less smooth while operating in modem mode, due to on-line error checking. Also, sudden uncommanded changes in bank angle are common. This is definitely not something the player wants to have happen when about to get a gun track on a friend during modem play's two-player duel

mode. Given the immense possibilities modem mode of play provides, one can only hope these obstacles are overcome.

Additionally, the game occasionally locks up. This does not happen often, but having the machine lock up twenty minutes into a mission is not conducive to lowering blood pressure.

The last "weakness" of the program is also its greatest strength. The program is very large in scope and is designed for someone very interested in the area simulated. To properly enjoy the game requires some long hours learning the system and perfecting tactics. If the player wants a quick shoot-'em-up diversion, *Falcon 3.0* is not the answer. Of course, should the gamer be looking for an in-depth simulation of modern air combat and be willing to put some effort into it, there is no reason to look further.

Lessons Learned

Here are a few quick tips on how to keep situational awareness (SA) out of the mapcase. Take advantage of the learning modes and ability to select less capable adversaries. The game is involved and the controls to the F-16 are complex. So, it is a good idea to make them become second nature by practicing good habit patterns when flying in low-threat environments. This will pay big dividends when the adversary skill level increases. That's what peacetime flying is all about: reinforcing good habit patterns so that they become automatic in combat.

Good pilots keep their eyes out of the cockpit to the maximum extent possible. (That Flanker contact at 30 miles isn't nearly as deadly as the Farmer two miles away at one's six.) To do this, go to the track mode of viewing and toggle between all aircraft in visual range to ensure no new bandit has entered the equation. Use track mode vice padlock, as it shifts from target to target more quickly and may provide a tally ho on any incoming missiles. The time saved between using track mode vice padlock may be all the time the player has to initiate a break turn and dispense countermeasures. Use the padlock to engage once one bandit is singled out.

Once the immediate area is sanitized for close-in threats, switch to the internal view to check the threat warning indicator and radar for more distant threats. Diligently following this plan greatly reduces the chances of being shot down by an unseen bandit. Remember, throughout the history of aerial warfare, the vast majority of kills were scored against an unaware foe.

When engaged, shoot first. Don't waste time trying to sweeten the shot. If it meets launch parameters, fire. Additionally, shoot your best weapon first. Four AMRAAMs on the rails don't do any good if the plane they are attached to is going down in a fireball.

When firing a missile, don't stare to see if it scores. Use the time to scan the sky for threats and break the current plane of motion, while simultaneously dispensing countermeasures. Chances are, the player has been predictable while trying to obtain a firing solution and predictable aircraft are dead aircraft.

Try to use hit-and-run tactics, keeping airspeed up. Getting anchored in a low-speed knife fight allows Ivan's buddy across the circle to find an entry at the player's six and ruin his whole day.

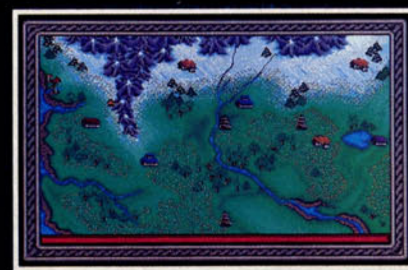
Mission Summary

Spectrum HoloByte set their sights very high throughout the *Falcon 3.0* project. They wanted to create the best flight simulator yet. Of course, "yet" is an interesting word that opens up awesome possibilities for the future. As for the present, they have achieved everything they set out to do. **CGW**

Dusk of the Gods

ENTER THE HALLS OF VAHALLA...









IBM 256 Color screens

BECOME ONE OF ODIN'S CHAMPIONS, TRAVEL THROUGHOUT ALL THE REALMS OF CREATION, AND ATTEMPT TO CHANGE THE COURSE OF FATE. QUEST FOR KNOWLEDGE AND ALTER EVENTS SO THE GODS MAY DEFEAT THE MINIONS OF LOKE AT THE BATTLE OF RAGNOROK.

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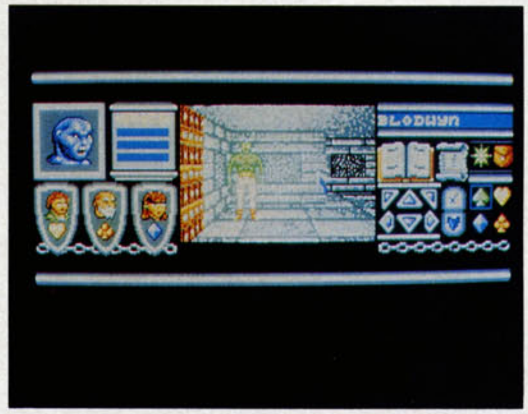
You Can Take the Bloodwych Out of the Dungeon...

TITLE:	Bloodwych
SYSTEMS:	IBM (from an Amiga and Atari ST original)
# PLAYERS:	1-2
PRICE:	$39.95
DEVELOPER:	Mirrorsoft
PUBLISHER:	Konami Buffalo Grove, IL



Konami's Bloodwych

by Allen L. Greenberg



The IEPA (Imaginary Environments Protection Agency) recently announced it will be investigating what it describes as "unhealthy and often fatal conditions" which prevail in the dungeons that role-players have been using as playgrounds for quite some time. Human adventurers will probably be fortunate to receive only minor citations for consuming food treated with enough preservatives to have kept the stuff fresh throughout recorded history, as well as the gratuitous quaffing of untested potions. Certain mages and clerics face additional charges for excessive use of explosive incantations and other spells hazardous to the pseudo-environment. Other races, having spent millennia under the glow of phosphorescent lichen, openly sharing magic weaponry tainted by the blood and/or venom of zork-knows-how-many foreign creatures, face more severe penalties. Attorneys for the creatures are already planning to base their defense on the non-existence of their clients. First among the heroes to be indicted will undoubtedly be the Bloodwych.

The Bloodwych are really a swell bunch of guys who, several years ago, were quick to answer the trans-Atlantic call for more dungeon adventures for the Atari ST and Amiga computers. *Bloodwych* quickly became one of the most sought-after imported games by owners of those machines, and is now available in the United States for IBM computers. It features close-up, real-time action along with an icon-based command system. This combination is rapidly becoming popular in today's CRPGs and forms what this reviewer has referred to as the "gut-level interface." The game also boasts several other innovative features which have since failed to appear in any other program of its type.

The player must adopt the persona of one of the 16 Bloodwych champions, recruit three other characters from that group and lead them in a dungeon expedition to destroy the villain-in-residence. Alternatively, two players may each adopt a hero and form their own parties, letting their feelings for each other govern their interactions. Under this option, each party is assigned his or her own separate-but-equal portion of the screen. One player, then, simply treats the other's party like any other computer-generated characters which may be bargained with, ignored or fought against. (An option allowing two players to connect via modem could only have boosted the game's popularity and, possibly, set new records for players' telephone bills. Unfortunately, there is no such option.)

There are four classes of characters available and it is recommended that one of each be present in any party. Fighters and mages each excel at their respective trademark tasks of combat and spellcasting; adventurers are the most talented diplomats and assassins are at their best with a bow and arrow. Each of the game's 16 title characters belongs to one of the four classes, and possesses individual ratings in familiar areas such as strength and charisma. Muscle and magic are certainly vital skills in *Bloodwych*, but no less so is diplomacy. It is also unlikely that the player will be able to complete the game without an assassin on his team. So, fortunately, the game is well-balanced enough that each character has some specialty to add to the party's chances of success.

In addition, characters can perform with limited skill outside of their specialty. All classes may cast spells and each character enters the dungeon with one spell inscribed in his spellbook. To cast a spell, the character is made to consult his or her book and memorize the spell. The player must also decide how many "spell points" to invest in the casting. A greater expenditure of these points produces a more favorable result as well as a greater drain on the spellcaster. Unfortunately, these spells are not documented and it is left to the player to discover the use of such obscure incantations such as "alchemy" or "magelock." Acquiring new spells takes place while the character is asleep, provided he has gold to pay for the service and has advanced sufficiently in rank. At these times, the character will be visited by the Spell Fairy. Yes, the Spell Fairy.

In the dungeon the player will encounter those Bloodwych who are not members of his party, equipment merchants and no small number of monsters. It is possible to battle each of these in order to gain their possessions, but the player who does so will not complete the game. Selecting from the choices on an extensive dialogue menu, the player must both converse and barter with all he meets. Shrewd applications of flattery, salesmanship and an occasional dose of magic will help pry food, water, some useful objects and important information away from many would-be enemies. The creatures have a short attention span, however, and a boring conversation serves as mere foreplay for battle.

Dialogue takes place, not only with individuals whom the party encounters, but within the group as well. A member may be commended for his or her initiative. Such compliments may make that person more valuable to the team or simply more likely to cause problems by acting on his or her own. Admonishing that character will produce the opposite result. At any time, a member may be dismissed from the party in order to create a vacancy for someone else encountered in the dungeon. Another of the game's innovations allows a member of the group to remain in one spot while the others go somewhere else. Then, the player may switch back and forth to that individual's viewpoint. This is a wonderfully useful feature for helping to determine the function of the dungeon's myriad switches, buttons and pressure plates which frequently result in changes at remote locations.

There are nearly 40 levels to be explored and extensive graph-paper mapping is required. The "compass spell" will prove valuable, particularly in the various spinners and mazes. The place is organized into four dungeon levels with five towers, no part of which may be ignored if the quest is to conclude successfully. The puzzles, for the most part, are of the mechanical type, which require the player to manipulate switches and special items in order to gain access to other areas of the dungeon.

Players of the MS-DOS version are likely to be unimpressed with the graphic look of *Bloodwych*. The game's graphics on the Amiga and Atari ST were adequate at the time of its original release, but appear to have suffered in being redrawn on the IBM. The pictures are simple, blockish and contain a minimum of detail. The dungeon's occupants give the appearance of paper dolls mounted on Popsicle sticks for the purpose of a child's first puppet show. They raise and lower their arms during combat, but they might just as easily be waving "Hi." The scenery is also very small — only one-half of the screen is used in the one-player version and, of that, two-thirds are taken up with menus and icons. Sound effects in the game are likewise uninspiring and owners of soundboards will either choose not to use them or be forced to listen to the program's repetitive opening music for the duration of the quest.

Bloodwych was designed to be played using the mouse, although the keyboard may also be used. In a two-player game, the second player is supposed to be able to use a joystick, but this reviewer was unable to do so. In any event, the mouse-versus-keyboard combination seems to work well. The only significant problem with the interface is caused by the tiny, closely crowded icons. It is easy to click on the wrong command and, for example, instruct the hero to turn away from his adversary rather than attack. Needless to say, there are times when a full-screen display would have been greatly appreciated.

Despite its weak graphics, *Bloodwych* scores very solidly on game-play and deserves serious consideration from dungeon fanatics. Its budget price should certainly not be mistaken as an apology for an inferior gaming experience. Indeed, the IEPA will have its non-existent hands full in trying to evict players from this dungeon. **CGW**

California Schemin'

"Actors are not animals, they're human beings!"

"They are? Have you ever eaten with one?"

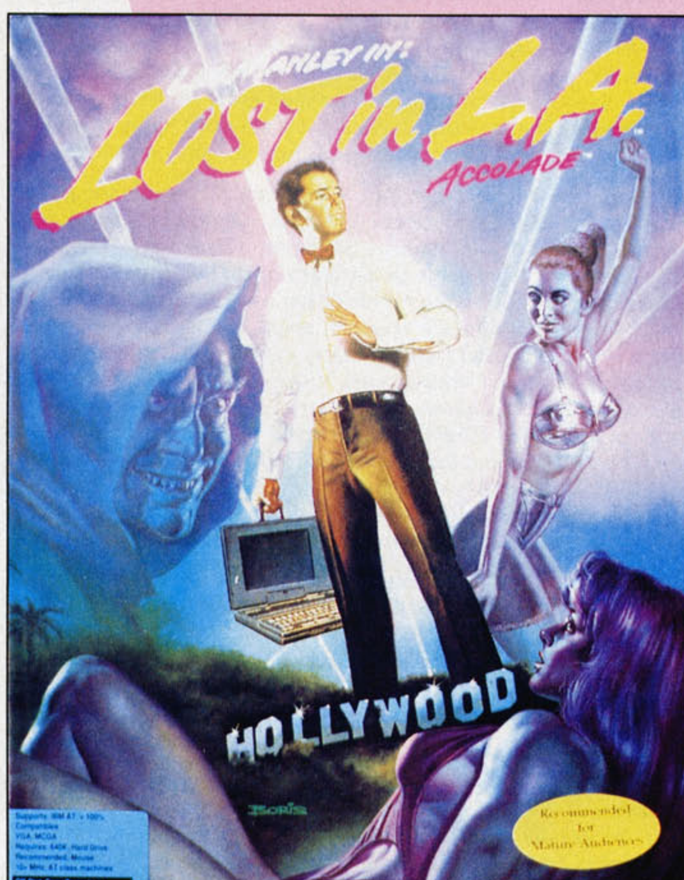
– Gene Wilder and Zero Mostel in Mel Brooks' The Producers

Lost in L.A. (*LILA*) is **Accolade**'s follow-up to their initial graphic adventure game *Search for the King*, starring Les Manley. Gone, however, is the conventional cartoon figure who nervously peered out from the gold record label on the earlier game's package. In his place is a Les made of real flesh and bone — or at least as close to real flesh and bone as Hollywood ever approaches. *LILA* uses dozens of digitized photos of actors, actresses and models to tell a story of lust, logic and mayhem in Los Angeles, without once stopping to remove its tongue from its digitized cheek.



With *LILA*, **Accolade** seems to be breaking away from the standard graphic-adventure appearance and interface, the "look and feel" most commonly associated with games from **Sierra**. Many adventure games being released now feature no-typing, object-oriented interfaces. However, this reviewer found **Accolade**'s to be one of the least cluttered and remarkably easiest to use. The game is heavily mouse-dependent, but use of the keyboard is still an option. By moving the cursor over the graphic screen, the player observes that it may change to a set of footprints or a question mark. Footprints indicate that Les may be made to walk to that location, while a question mark signals that some other interaction is possible.

Not once in *LILA* does the player have to endure the inept command, "Move Closer!" If there is an object or character on the screen which requires Les to move toward it in order to carry out a given command, he will do so on his own. Further, the player need not worry about guiding Les around corners or other graphic obstacles. Once the player clicks on a location with the footprint cursor, Les finds his own way there with gratifying quickness. There is also a refreshing lack of pixel-sized items buried in the graphic display which the player might too easily miss.



Objects which Les has in his inventory are revealed when the player moves the cursor to the bottom of the screen. By clicking on an object, the player may either read a brief description of it or select, "Use this item with...." If the latter is selected, the cursor then becomes the chosen object and the player may position it anywhere on the graphic screen to complete the interaction. Along with Les' inventory, a "computer" icon may also be selected. This calls up a menu of such mundane yet necessary functions as saving or loading games in progress, or turning off the background music.

Clicking on an object or person with the question mark cursor allows the player to gain more information about his or her choice before proceeding. If that choice is an object, it may be taken by the character. If it is a person, he or she may then be spoken to. Communicating with other characters in the story involves selecting phrases or questions from a menu. Certain key phrases will not appear on the menu until the player has progressed in the game by gaining certain knowledge or performing certain tasks. In most cases, conversation with the characters will provide hints to the player who has not made the required progress as to what he or she is lacking. In all cases, the character will attempt to say something funny.



Accolade's Les Manley in: Lost in L.A.

by Allen L. Greenberg

TITLE:	Les Manley in: Lost In L.A.
SYSTEM:	IBM
PROTECTION:	Code-wheel look-up
PRICE:	$59.95
DESIGNER:	Steve Cartwright
PUBLISHER:	Accolade San Jose, CA





The object of *LILA* is for Les to discover the UBG (Ultimate Bad Guy) who is abducting L.A.'s celebrities. Helmut Bean, Les' Lilliputian pal from *Search for the King*, now numbers himself among Hollywood's rich and famous. Unfortunately, "rich and famous" has now become "marked and endangered." When Helmut disappears mid-way through a phone conversation, Les decides it's time apply his superior mind to the case. In the process, Les will meet up with nearly every West Coast stereotype and cliche ever presented in the movies.

Beginning with the mellow-brained, hyper-tanned, hard-bodied perfectionists at Venice Beach and continuing with the sleaze-lords and eccentrics of Hollywood Boulevard, Les will need to understand the many egos which populate the city he is investigating. It was generally reassuring for this East Coast reviewer to know that he could, at any time, call on his West Coast editors for help in the translation of certain California-specific phrases.

Name-dropping is clearly the rule in *LILA* and seemingly hundreds of movie greats receive a tip of the hat from the program's authors. At times, the game recalls the silliness of a madcap 1960s spy film. The ending is based on an old Vincent Price horror favorite that has become the victim of satire countless times since it first appeared. Other computer games also receive their share of jibes and one scene includes a long list of famous game titles. Les is also particularly fond of reminiscing back to the old pre-VGA days of his previous adventure.

The game is relatively easy to solve, although the player will need to be thorough in directing Les' explorations in order to successfully solve the mystery. Although the volume of inventory Les must gather is not large, certain key items are misleadingly inconspicuous. Players may also look forward to a small degree of nudity in the game's introduction and several scenes of implied sex in the story itself. Les has a unique ability to multi-task his computer expertise along with his romantic talents.

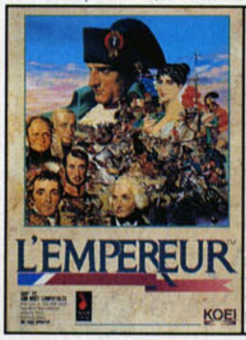
It is very appropriate that this particular adventure game, with its extravagant use of live actors, takes place in Los Angeles. The cast easily resembles a group of Hollywood "wanna-bes" waiting to hear from their agents, perhaps wondering if they will now be forever type-cast as "software actors."

In addition to the close-ups of the models, the game features some interesting hand-painted graphics to represent larger and more distant views. The blend of live action with the painted scenery works well and the transition from one to the other is quite smooth. The 3-D effect in wide-angle shots is also particularly well-achieved, as is the scrolling from one screen to the next. Mindless pop music plays throughout the program unless the player chooses to play without it. Certain sound effects, however, such as loud female shrieks, may *not* be turned off and can happen unexpectedly.

If *LILA* has a drawback, it is its concentrated serving of pop-California culture and West Coast "inside" humor. Otherwise, this beginner-level game represents a good, solid effort from Accolade. The digitized photos will not appeal to everyone and may not even be appropriate for an adventure game taking place outside of California. But, heck, actors need to eat. **CGW**

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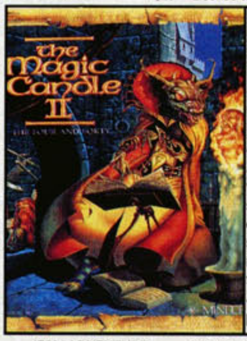
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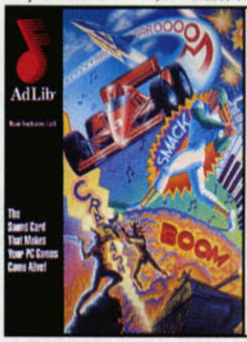


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- APBA Encyclopedia $34
- APBA General Manager $31



'ADLIB GOLD 1000' from **ADLIB INC** is a high quality **stereo** sound card. It complies with Multimedia PC sound adapter standards. Features: 16 bit stereo DAC providing 96db of dynamic range, programmable audio mixer, 20 stereo channels, MIDI input and output, sampling rates of up to 44.1 KHz, stereo input jack, and game port. **$199**

- APBA Innovator $34
- APBA Stat Master $39
- APBA Wizard $31
- APBA 1908 - 91 Ea $21
- APBA Basketball $28
- APBA Bowling $19
- APBA Football $49
- Basketball Challenge $28
- B ball Ch. 1987 - 88 Ea $13
- B ball Ch. 1989 - 90 Ea $17
- Bo Jackson Baseball $32
- Blades of Steel $26
- Cycles Grand Prix $28
- Daily Double Horse $19
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- Greg Norman Shark Att $25
- Gretsky Hockey 2 $34
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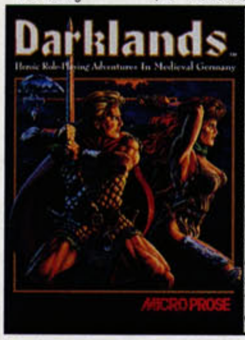
'WORLD CHAMPION CRIBBAGE' contains all aspects of this classic card game. You cut for first crib, shuffle, deal, discard, cut for starter, play your cards and peg your points as you attempt to skunk your opponent. Includes 2 difficulty levels, variable game speed, and a win-loss record. **$24**

- Hardball 2 $28
- Hardball 3 $34
- Indianapolis 500 $17
- International Sports Ch $29
- Joe Montana Football $31
- John Elway's QB $ 6
- King's Beach Volleyball $15
- Lakers v Celtics $19
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- LH Boxing $30
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- LH Full Count Baseball $30
- LH Hockey $30
- LH Pro Basketball $30
- LH Team Disks $15
- LH League Leaders $15
- LH Utility Disks $15
- Links Golf $37
- Links Golf WIN $39
- Links Course 1 -6 Ea $17
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- Madden Football $21
- Madden TD 89 & 90 $18
- Madden Football 2 $32
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- Magic Johnson MVP $18
- Mario Andretti Racing $32
- ML Basbll Mngr's Chllng $24
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- ML TD 1982 - 1990 Ea $17
- ML All Stars $17
- ML Franchise Disks Ea $20
- ML Box Score Stats $20
- ML GM Disk 3 $25
- ML Roster Security $20
- Microleague Basketball $28
- ML Personal Pro Golf $28
- ML Football Deluxe $39
- ML Ftball Team Disks $17
- Michael Jordan Flt Sim $44
- Mike Ditka Football $34
- NASCAR Challenge $31
- NFL Challenge $60
- NFL 1984 - 1987 Ea $15
- NFL 1988 - 1991 Ea $22
- NFL Preseason Disk $22
- NFL All Star Teams $22
- NFL College Alumni $22
- NFL College Teams $19
- NFL Dream Teams $20
- NFL Greatest Teams $22
- NFL Roster Editor $20
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- NFLP roleague Football $49
- Nicklaus Signature Edit $42
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- Nicklaus Greatest 18 $27
- Nicklaus Unlimited Golf $29
- NG Clip Art $17
- NG Course 2 $ 6
- NG Course 1 & 2 $19
- NG Course 3, 4, or 5 $15
- Omni Play Basketball $34
- Over the Net Volleyball $24
- Pete Rose Baseball $ 9
- PGA Tour Golf $32
- PGA Tour Golf WIN $32
- PGA Tour Golf Disk 1 $17
- PGA Tour Golf Ltd Edt $45
- Playmaker Football $32
- Pro Football Analyst $34
- Pro Tennis Tour 2 $32
- Road to the Final Four $37
- Robo Sport WIN $37

IBM AMIGA MACINTOSH GAMES AND HINT BOOKS FOR LESS

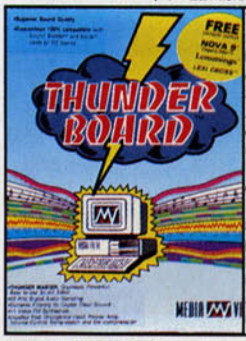
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- Reel Fish'n $12
- Serve & Volley $12
- Skate or Die $15
- Ski or Die $16
- Speedball 2 $27
- Sport of Kings $18
- Super Car Pack $37
- Tennis Cup $32
- Tie Break Tennis $27
- TKO Boxing $6



'DARKLANDS' draws upon the lore, myths and superstitions of medieval Germany to create a realistic fantasy role-playing game. A new menu system that provides more traditional rpg options than ever before. Characters fight in real time combat to develop skills that allow them to grow and develop. **$39**

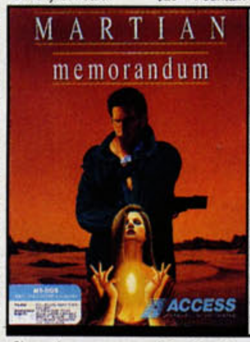
- Tom Landry Football $29
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- T LaR Fantasy Managr $15
- T LaRussa Stadiums $15
- T LaR Teams1901-68 $15
- Weaver Baseball 1.5 $19
- Weaver Commissioner $16
- Weaver 1988 - 1989 Ea $16
- Weaver Baseball 2.0 $32
- Weaver Commisnr 2.0 $21
- Weaver 2.0 1990 Teams $16
- 1990 Stats/Mngr Profils $16
- Weaver 2.0 Comm Edt $56
- World Class Soccer $28

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- 688 Attack Sub $10
- Advnturs Willy Beamish $10
- Altered Destiny $10
- Bard's Tale 1 - 3 Ea $10
- Buck Rogers 1 or 2 $10
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- Champions of Krynn $10
- Civilization $16
- Code Name Iceman $10
- Colonel Bequest 1 or 2 $10
- Conquests of Camelot $10
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- Curse of Azure Bonds $10
- Death Knights of Krynn $10
- Dragons of Flame $10
- Drakkhen $10
- Elvira 1 or 2 $10
- Eye of Beholder 1 $10
- Eye of Beholder 2 $12
- Fountain of Dreams $10
- Free DC $10
- Gateway Savage Frntr $10
- Hard Nova $10
- Harpoon Battlebook $19
- Heart of China $10
- Hero's Quest 1 - 3 Ea $10
- Immortal $10



- Indy Jones Lst Crsade $10
- Indy Jones Fate Atlantis $10
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- Pool of Darkness $12
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- Savage Empire $10
- Search for the King $10
- Secret Mnky Islnd 1or 2 $10
- Secret of Silver Blades $10
- Shadow Sorcerer $10
- Simcity/Simearth $20



'MARTIAN MEMORANDUM' is an exhilarating, fast paced interactive mystery. You are Tex Murphy, a hard boiled gumshoe, who faces murder, deception, and prophecy while searching for the martian memorandum. Features fully animated talking characters and on demand help. **$37**

- Simearth $19
- Space Quest 1 - 4 Ea $10
- Starflight 1 or 2 $10
- Strategy Plus 3 -11 Ea $8
- Strategy Plus 12-17 $4
- Treasures Savage Frntr $10
- Tunnels & Trolls $10
- Ultima 4 - 7 Ea $10
- Wizardry 6 Cosmic Frg $12
- Wizardry 7 Crusade $12
- Yeager's Air Combat $19
- Zak McKracken $10

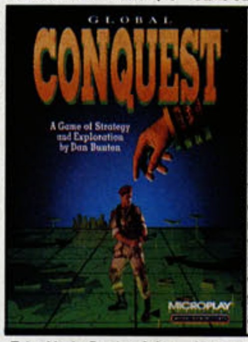
The 'THUNDER BOARD' is a sound board that is 100% compatible with Soundblaster and Adlib. It reproduces digitized sounds using an 8 bit DAC. Features include dynamic filtering, 11 Voice FM music synthesizer, sampling rate up to 22 KHz, microphone input, joystick port, and a 2 watt power amplifier. **$84**

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- 2400 AD $28
- Autoduel $26
- Bad Blood $31
- Bard's Tale 1 $15
- Bard's Tale 2 $19
- Bard's Tale 3 $31
- Bard's Tale Cnstrctn St $34
- Battletech 1 or 2 $31
- Blade Warrior $12
- Bloodwych $27

IBM AD & D
- AD&D Bundle $38
- Champions of Krynn $32
- Curse of Azure Bonds $32
- Dark Queen of Krynn $32
- Death Knights of Krynn $32
- Dragon Strike $12
- Dragons of Flame $12
- Eye of the Beholder $32
- Eye of the Beholder 2 $38
- Gateway Savge Frontr $32
- Heroes of the Lance $12
- Pool of Darkness $38
- Pool of Radiance $32
- Secret of Silver Blades $32
- Shadow Sorcerer $32
- Treasurs Savage Frontr $32
- War of the Lance $9

IBM ROLE PLAYING
- Buck Rogers 1 $12
- Buck Rogers 2 $32
- Captain Blood $9
- Captive $30
- Celtic Legends $32
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- Conan $32
- Corporation $32
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- Fountain of Dreams $15
- Hard Nova $17
- Hero's Quest 1 $21
- Hero's Quest 2 or 3 $34
- Hyperspeed $34
- Immortal $27
- Keef the Thief $16
- Keys to Maramon $19
- King's Bounty $19
- Knights of Legend $30
- Light Speed $29
- Lord of the Rings 1 $34
- Lord of the Rings 2 $37
- Loremaster $39
- Magic Candle 1 $15
- Magic Candle 2 $37
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- Megatraveller 1 $16
- Megatraveller 2 $19
- Megatraveller 3 $39
- Midwinter 1 $12
- Midwinter 2 $28
- Might & Magic 1 $12
- Might & Magic 2 $12
- Might & Magic 1, 2&HB $33
- Might & Magic 3 $37
- Might & Magic 4 $42
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- Murder $29
- Paladin $28
- Paladin Scrolls Disk $16
- Pirates $9
- Planet's Edge $37
- Prophecy 1 $12
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- Rings of Medusa $24
- Scavengers $34
- Sea Rogue $39
- Sentinel Worlds $15
- Shadowgate $31
- Sleeping Gods Lie $29

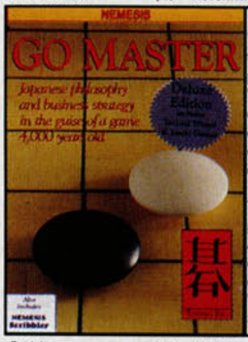
IBM ROLE PLAYING
- Sorcerian $34
- Space 1889 $16
- Space Inc $34
- Space Rogue $30
- Space Wrecked $32
- Spellbound $39
- Spirit of Excaliber $29
- Starflight 1 or 2 $19
- Sword of the Samurai $9
- Swrd Samrai & Pirates $16



'GLOBAL CONQUEST' is the first strategy game that allows up to 4 players to compete while exploring a **random** world via modem, link, or LAN. You face up to four cutthroat computer adversaries, each with a distinct personality. Features 3 world view sizes and control of land, sea & air forces. **$39**

- Tales Magic: Prophcy S $38
- Tangled Tales $21
- Terran Envoy $12
- Third Courier $9
- Times of Lore $28
- Tunnels & Trolls $12
- Twilight 2000 $34
- Ultima Martian Dreams $37
- Ultima Savage Empire $34
- Ultima Trilogy $35
- Ultima Trilogy 2 $??
- Ultima 1-6 Bundle CD $??
- Ultima 4 or 5 $35
- Ultima 6 False Prophet $39
- Ultima 7 Black Gate $45
- Ultima Stygian Abyss $48
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- Vengeance of Excalibur $32
- Windwalker $28
- Wizardry Trilogy $32
- Wizardry 4 $19
- Wizardry 5 $37
- Wizardry 6 Cosmic Frg $37
- Wizardry 7 Crusaders $39

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- Airborne Ranger $12
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- Artura $6
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- Battlestorm $32
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- Blockbuster $6
- Blockout $28
- Blood Money $28
- Brain Blaster $28



'NEMESIS GO VER 5 DELUXE' is the ultimate computer GO program. With the simplicity of checkers and the complexity of chess, GO is a serious strategy game. Includes: GO MASTER-a basic GO player and tutor, Joseki Genius adds complex corner openings, Tactical Wizard and the Scribbler. **$109**

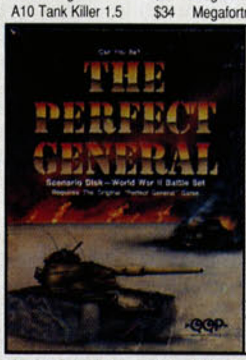
- Budokan $17
- Colorado $9
- Continuum $29
- Cool Croc Twins $34
- Crackdown $17
- Dark Century $27
- Day of the Viper $19
- D Generation $32
- Dig Dug $6
- Double Dragon 2 $15
- Dr Doom's Revenge $12

IBM HARDWARE
- Ad Lib Sound Card $64
- Ad Lib Gold 1000 $179
- Adlib Progrmrs Manual $27
- Adlib Surround Sound $64
- Adlib Telephone Module $64
- Ad Lib Visual Composr $75
- Ad Lib Speakers $15
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- Flight Stick w Falcon $46
- Game Card 3 $39
- Champ Joystick $24
- Maxx Control Yoke $59
- Rudder Peddals $39
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- Sound Blaster $109
- Sound Blaster Pro $189
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- Thrustmaster Joystick $69
- Thrustmstr Pro Joystick $109
- Thrustmstr Weapn Cntrl $79
- Thunder Board SndBrd $84
- Thunder Board Spkrs $15

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- Dragon's Lair 1 $24
- Dragon's Lair 2 $34
- Drgn's Lair Singe Cstl $34
- Finale $9
- Freakn Funky Fuzzballs $19
- Galaxian $6
- Gauntlet 1 or 2 $9
- Golden Axe $17
- Gold of the Aztecs $29
- Grave Yardage $12
- Gremlins 2 $9
- Guy Spy $29
- Harmony $19
- Hard Driving 2 $38
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- Home Alone $27
- Killing Cloud $29
- Knight Force $29
- Lemmings $32
- Lemmings Data Disk $19
- Light Quest $32
- Loopz $24
- Marble Madness $15
- Monty Python $15
- Ms Pac Man $9
- M.U.D.S. $19
- Nevermind $25
- Night Breed $15
- Night Hunter $25
- Night Shift $17
- Nova 9 $21
- Obitus $34
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- Oil's Well $19
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- Viking Child $32
- Volfied $24
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- Wild Streets $31
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- Xenocide $19
- X Men 1 $9
- X Men 2 $25

IBM SIMULATION
- 688 Attack Sub $19
- A10 Avenger $43
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'WORLD WAR II BATTLE SET' for the Perfect General includes the folowing scenarios: Pegasus Bridge, Sicily, Guadalcanal, Kasserine Pass, Gafsa, Anzio, Utah Beach, Omaha Beach, Okinawa, Saipan, Gazala-Bir Hacheim, Iwo Jima, Arnheim, Oahu, and Kharkov. **$23**

- Abrams Battle Tank $12
- Aces of the Pacific $42
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- Aces Pacific Mission 2 $27
- Aces over Europe $42
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- Harrier Combat Sim $9
- Heatwave $25
- Heros of the 357th $32
- Hoverforce $31
- Hunt for Red October $22



'ACES OF THE PACIFIC' brings all the action of the War in the Pacific to your PC. Fly the A6M Zero, F4U Corsair, F6F Hellcat, and many more. Includes single mission or campaign play for either side, legendary aces to fight, a powerful mission recorder, and an extensive 240 page manual. **$42**

- Hyperspeed $34
- Jet Fighter 2.0 $39
- Knights of the Sky $29
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- Life & Death 1 $24
- Life & Death 2 $32
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- Megafortress $37
- Megafortress Mission 1 $27
- Megafortress Mission 2 $27
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- Mig 29 Fulcrum $32
- Power Boat Simulator $39
- East Coast Voyages $34
- West Coast Voyages $34
- Red Baron EGA $34
- Red Baron VGA $36
- Red Baron Mission 1 $24
- Red Baron Mission 2 $24
- Red Storm Rising $12
- Rapcon $29
- Sailing Instructor $199



'THRUSTMASTER' flightcontrol system is the only joystick designed to function like those found on modern fighting aircraft. This 5 button joystick runs from a standard game card interface and is fully compatible with older games. While newer titles such as Falcon 3 will take full advantage of its capabilities. **$69**

- Sailing Simulator $39
- East Coast Voyages $34
- West Coast Voyages $34
- Scenery Collection A/B $37
- Search for the Titanic $37
- Secret Weapons Lftwff $44
- S Weapons Exp1 P38 $21
- S Weapons Exp2 P80 $21
- S Weapons Exp3 He162 $21
- S Weapons Exp4 Do335 $21
- Shuttle $37

IBM SIMULATION
- Silent Service 1 $7
- Silent Service 2 $34
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- Wing Commander 2 $45
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- WC2 Operations 1&2 $27
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- Wolfpack $15
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Draxon's Back!

Nova 9 from Dynamix

by Todd Threadgill

TITLE:	Nova 9
SYSTEM:	Amiga, IBM
REVIEWED:	IBM
PROTECTION:	None
PRICE:	$34.95
DESIGNER:	Paul Bowman
PUBLISHER:	Dynamix Eugene, OR



Bad guys have a knack for sticking around. From Professor Moriarty to Darth Vader, men with evil in their hearts have proved difficult to defeat throughout the entire history of literature, film and television. And so it is with computer games, as the wicked Gir Draxon himself returns to fight another day in **Dynamix**'s latest release, *Nova 9*. Defeated by brave gamers in *Stellar 7*, **Dynamix**'s landmark arcade-action hit recently spiffed up and released for MS-DOS and the Amiga with improved graphics and sound, Gir Draxon now leads another relentless assault force of Arcturan baddies. This time he's not kidding around!

Filled with non-stop action against intelligent computer-controlled enemies, *Nova 9* is a tough game to beat. While *Stellar 7* offered armored arcade combat on seven different worlds of increasing difficulty, the action in *Nova 9* stretches across the surfaces of nine planets and features some of the most challenging action this reviewer has ever seen in an arcade-action game.

For those unfamiliar with the first game, *Stellar 7* is a first-person perspective science fiction battle-tank game. *Nova 9* carries on the ideas from the older game and improves on them. The player is still the pilot of a heavily armed hovercraft-tank vehicle (now in its second generation and named the Raven II). There



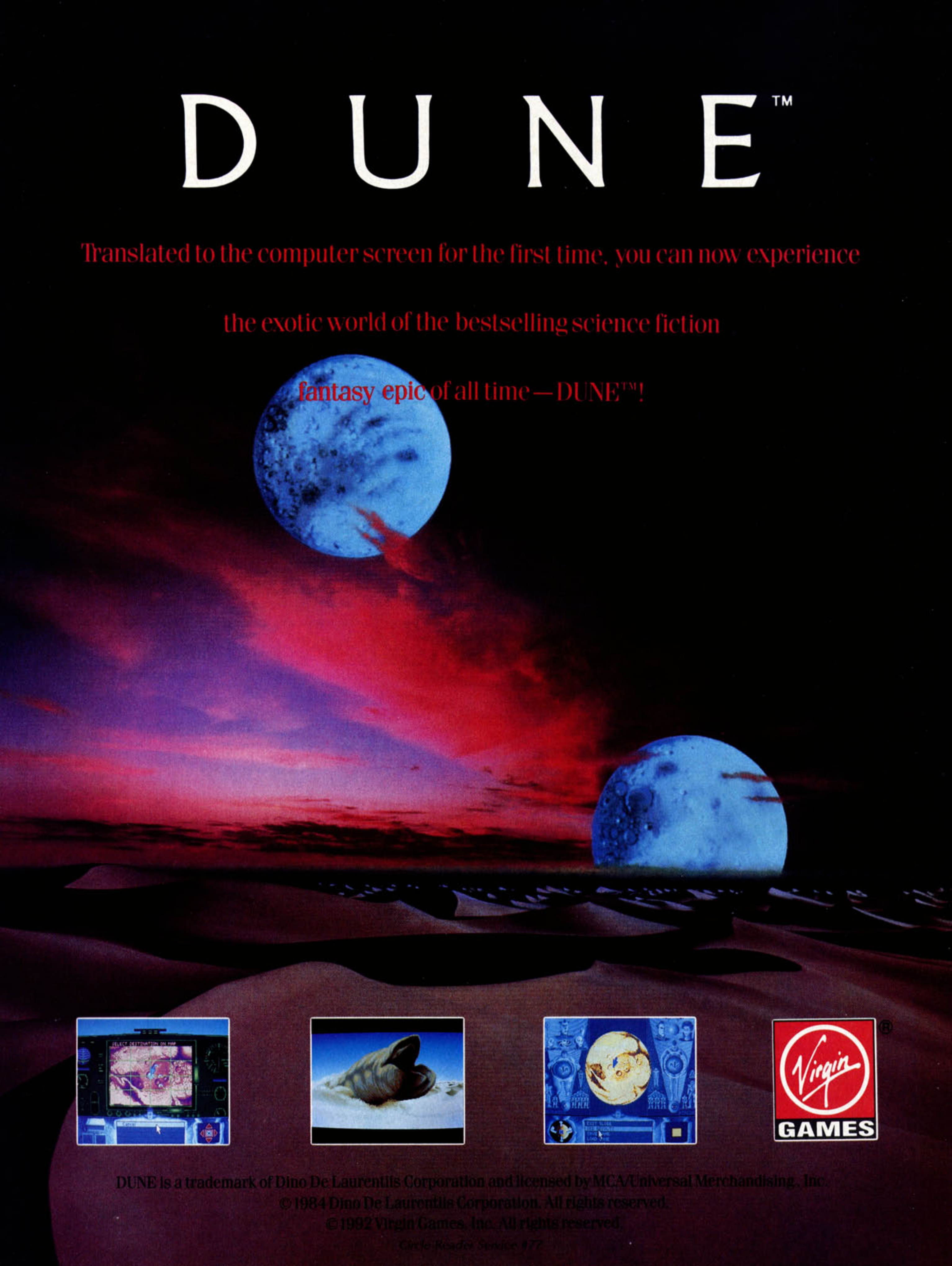
are many, many enemy types in *Nova 9* (very few of which are documented in the manual, leaving the majority to be discovered by the unsuspecting player!), and all of them are creative in both design and presentation. They are also extremely dangerous to the Raven II. It is quite easy to find oneself being mercilessly shot at by peripheral enemy forces while staring in wonder, jaws agape, at a newly-discovered enemy.

Nova 9 starts up with a cinematic introduction to the storyline. While players familiar with the *Wing Commander* games (especially *Wing Commander II*) will find *Nova 9*'s cinematic scenes somewhat less than impressive, they serve their purpose well without being overly long or intrusive. In the opening scenes, the player finds out that Gir Draxon's ship has crashed on an unnamed planet (which, fortunately for our villain, just happens to have a breathable atmosphere). Upon emerging from the wreckage of his ship, he annihilates one of the local critters and gazes malevolently at a distant city. Later, a garbled distress call comes in. The Arcturans are attacking the Nova 9 system! Gir Draxon is back in business and things don't look good for the forces of peace and freedom as the opening credits begin to roll.

Fortunately, there is someone within reach of the Nova 9 system, someone who stands as the sole warrior of good against the marauding hordes of Arcturans — that's right, the player's going in there alone. Well, not completely alone. There will be the assistance of "Sparky," a repair droid who can fix even the most serious damage quickly and easily; and S.A.R.A.H., a super-computer with a woman's face. (The player is cast in the role of Captain John Alex and S.A.R.A.H. was created in the image of Alex's dead wife, Sarah.) Once again designers have made the unnecessary assumption that the player is male. While this may be true for the majority of computer game players, it is certainly not always the case. This comes as a surprise from **Dynamix** — being a subsidiary of **Sierra**, one would hope that the efforts made by the parent company toward representing both sexes equally would be made manifest in the products of the subsidiary.

S.A.R.A.H. travels with the player into the fray and offers advice from time to time, but for the most part the player is sent to battle with (aside from the Raven II) little more than moral support. What else is new?

Nova 9 is all about action and the game's designers have proven themselves well attuned to what makes a good game in this vein. The pacing of the action, with periods of frenzied activity interspersed with slow moments, during which the player can take a breather, creates an irresistible momentum that keeps the player glued to the computer. The game is structured in levels, with the player warping to a new planet at the beginning of each level. Once on the new planet, the player will battle swarms of enemies until the Boss enemy shows up for that level.


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Circle Reader Service #77

These Bosses are awesome, fascinating and challenging. They are not easy to beat. As an example, consider the Boss of the first level (the planet Kryon): a huge, tank-like creation with a completely impervious bulldozer-shaped shield across its front. This thing attacks by ramming into the Raven II repeatedly and it moves fast, so getting behind it isn't easy. With each new level comes new enemies and a new Boss (such as a mine-laying tank, whose mines slither in lizardlike fashion directly toward the Raven II, and a gargantuan brown salamander that fires bursts of deadly shells in an arc). There is certainly plenty to do at all times.

In addition, the enemies one encounters are intelligent enough to keep the player hopping. There have been many games since the dawn of computer gaming in which the computer-controlled enemies possess the collective intelligence of a brick — they could only defeat the player through sheer numbers. Thankfully, *Nova 9* rises above this level. Each of the enemies has its own distinctive way of aiding in the player's destruction. Generic tanks and sand skimmers (looking like roller skates on skis) crisscross the landscape, their gunsights locked on the Raven II, while swooping creatures resembling pterodactyls and hopping birds (in this reviewer's opinion, the most annoying of all the enemies in the game) lob shots at the player. All of these creatures are well-animated. One note: players with slower machines (like this reviewer's 10-MHz 286 machine) who reveled in *Stellar 7*'s blazing animation speed may be somewhat disappointed with the frame rate in *Nova 9*. Since there is so much more going on in the new game, it slows down the animation considerably. One solution, of course, is to turn down the level of graphic detail, but doing so will remove the flashy graphics that are a major part of the game.

With all this going for it, one could ask, surely there's something about *Nova 9* that could use improvement? Of course there is. The major problem with *Nova 9* is its lack of a save-game function. While some may decry the option of saving one's game in an arcade-action game, this reviewer found the game to be sufficiently difficult to warrant the inclusion of such a feature. It is particularly frustrating to emerge relatively unscathed from the first few levels of the game, lose it all on the next level, and have to start all over from the beginning. The designers have taken a small step in the right direction by allowing the player two chances to continue from the place at which he left off, but a save-game feature would eliminate a lot of frustrating repetition.

Another problem (minor, to be sure, but an annoyance nonetheless) is an inconsistency in the directional controls between *Stellar 7* and *Nova 9*. In the earlier game, holding down the "2" and "3" keys (on the numeric keypad) caused the Raven to back up while turning to the right. Similarly, holding down the "2" and "1" keys backed up while turning left. In *Nova 9*, these keys cause exactly the opposite result. As a grizzled veteran of *Stellar 7*, this reviewer was thrown off by this change and forced to re-learn the commands. This could have easily been avoided.

Despite these problems, *Nova 9* is an excellent offering for arcade fans everywhere, particularly those with machines fast enough to support the game's breathtaking graphics. A thoroughly professional effort, *Nova 9* follows in the illustrious footsteps of its predecessor while blazing a new trail on its own. **CGW**

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Scorpion's View

Scorpia's "Eye"-temized Deductions: Strategic Simulations' Eye of the Beholder II

as told by Scorpia

Scorpia is an experienced and respected adventure game expert. CGW is pleased to be able to provide this forum for her distinctive and often controversial perspective.

Eye of the Beholder II: Legend of Darkmoon is the stand-alone follow-up to the previous *Eye of the Beholder* from **SSI**. This time around, instead of wandering through sewers, your party gets to explore the passages and byways of an evil temple.

If you saved your characters from the previous game, you can transfer them to *Darkmoon*. Unlike the usual procedure in SSI tranfers, the characters will keep almost all their equipment, including the really good items, such as the sword +5, the halberd +5, magical armor, wands, potions, etc. About the only things that don't make the transition are the stone portal keys.

This gives the transferred characters a big advantage, and considering the toughness of the opponents in *Darkmoon*, bringing over your party from *EOB I* is highly recommended. The game will be a little easier if you have your original characters and equipment. You will have to make a choice, though, on which ones to transfer, as you can start with only a party of four.

Important! The original version of *EOB II* contains a bug in regard to triple-classed half-elves. Should you bring over such a character, the game is likely to crash on you at certain points. If you find this happening in your game, you can do one of two things: (1) start over, transferring some other character instead of the triple half-elf, or (2) send your *EOB II* disks to SSI for a replacement.

If you didn't play *EOB I*, or no longer have a save game from it, there are two other options available. The first is to create a completely new party of four characters. You have the same classes and races to choose from as before, the ability to modify the stats (highly recommended), and the characters will start off at around level 6, with armor, weapons, spells, etc.

The second option is to go with a pre-created "quick start" party. This is a well-balanced team, also of about level 6, with weapons, armor, spells, and so on (since these are pre-created, however, you can't modify their stats). For those who want to get into the game right away, this is a good choice. Remember, however, that you can't change any of the party members; it's all or none. If you don't like the mix of characters, you'll have to create your own group.

Whichever team you decide on, it will start in the same place, namely a small woods outside Darkmoon Temple. Those who were looking forward to spending some time out in the fresh air will, alas, be disappointed. The forest is a very small area, and there isn't much to do in it, except kill a lot of wolves. All of the action in the game takes place in and under the temple.

So, it's best to find your way there as soon as possible. You will be met at the door by a pair of clerics. While they look okay and sound congenial, they are, in fact, evil (all the clerics in here are evil). You will have to kill both of them to penetrate into the temple's inner recesses. Doing that, by the way, permanently shuts the door to the forest, and you won't be able to leave again.

Once past the inner door, you can go either upstairs or downstairs. The upstairs has two locked doors which can't be opened at the start, so you'll have to go below. This is where the game proper begins.

Like *EOB I*, *Darkmoon* is a linear game, which has to be done in a certain order. First is the underground, followed by the three towers. Completing each area provides the means to reach the next one.

When you're done with the underground portion, you will have four horns that (when used in the right location) open up the way to the first tower. This tower is actually a testing ground for Darkmoon clerics (pretty rugged tests, too). Successfully completing it gives your party the mark of Darkmoon.

This mark, in turn, allows you to pass a magic door that leads to the second tower. Among other things, you will find the crimson key somewhere along the way, and this key opens the door to the red tower, which is the end game.

That sounds quick, but don't be deceived. It's a *long* haul from the temple's front door to the big confrontation with Dran Draggore. *EOB II* is a larger game than *EOB I* and there are many more puzzles to solve than the first game had. Don't expect to just whiz through this one in a couple of days.

As before, you will come across some NPCs (living and dead) whom you can take into the party. Since there is only room for two extra people, you will have to make some decisions on which ones to accept. I went with Shorn the Dwarven cleric and Calandra the human fighter, since extra healing is always welcome (and necessary in one area), and I already had three magic users in my group (actually, dual-classed Elves), and so didn't need any more. Your needs may be different, however, so don't just go by that.

Do keep in mind that any NPC you dismiss is gone for good and you can't get that person back again. Further, if you turn down someone who asks to join you, he or she also goes away forever. So, make your decisions wisely.

In general, you can get through most of the combats with the usual mix of fighting, spells and sashaying around to avoid damage. However, there are three spots in particular that will be of more than average difficulty.

The first is underground, where you must take on a *lot* of skeleton warriors. (These are exactly the same as the skeleton lords of the first game; only the name has been changed, for obscure reasons.) These things are tough, as anyone who has fought them before will remember, and they come in groups of four.

Even worse, there are some clerics with them and these priests cast spells. Compounding the problem is the fact that you're down there in narrow passages, with little room to maneuver. It all adds


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up to some *very* tough fighting fairly early in the game.

Your best bet here is to hit, back up, hit, back up and keep moving until you get to an open area where you can move around a bit. Spells don't usually work very well on these things, although on occasion ice storms will do some damage. Lightning bolts are good to use when clerics are present, as they have no magic resistance and will take damage. Duck into a room whenever you can to renew spells and heal injuries. Eventually, you will be able to wipe them all out (and you do have to kill them all), but expect to have a hard time of it.

Another problem area is the frost giant level. The giants (even though on hands and knees) can hit multiple party members with one blow, including those in the back ranks. This makes them extremely deadly, especially as you are fighting them in narrow passages that offer no maneuvering room. Your best tactics here are to use protective spells, back up, send lightning bolts at them (these seemed more effective than anything else) and hope you will have time to rest up and heal the injured before any more of them show up.

The last tough spot is the fight with Dran Draggore. Dran is fast and deadly, for more reasons than one. The only way to handle him is to back up to a large room and use maneuverability. Let your two front fighters take swipes at him while you keep moving (haste spells help a little here; cast one before you start fighting Dran). Don't bother with throwing spells at him. There isn't enough time for that. Constant movement is the only thing that can keep you alive in this confrontation.

These situations point up the problems with the interface, which has not changed substantially from the previous game. As someone correctly remarked, "It's only real-time for the monsters." There is still the hesitation when a spell goes off, during which time no one in the party can do anything, while the critters are merrily hacking away at your characters.

Also, as before, precious time is lost while you flip through a spell book to get to a spell. Everyone in the party waits while you click around to bring up a magic missile or fireball or cure light wounds. The same holds true if a character is switching weapons, or exchanging a weapon for a spell book or holy symbol.

For a product that bills itself as "real-time," this is ridiculous. Real-time means all characters should have a chance to act without waiting. With as many as six



individuals to manipulate in combat, that is not possible with the current system. In fact, with multiple characters, it isn't possible at all.

In my article on *EOB I*, I suggested the addition of an optional auto-combat mode. Since the two characters up front are almost always fighters, it makes sense that, most of the time, you'll want them to hack away at the opposition. Further, there are usually others in the back ranks who have missile weapons such as bows. In many cases, you want them to be firing their arrows each round.

With an auto-combat mode, the fighting types would continue to slash away, allowing you to set up spells without loss of time or effectiveness. It would also make things easier in terms of moving and fighting at the same time.

Currently, you need two hands to fight effectively in combat, because the movement arrows are on the opposite side of the screen from the character icons. That is poor placement, since you must then have one hand on the keyboard to move the party *and* one hand on the mouse to click on weapons and spell books. Trying to move and fight using just the mouse is virtually impossible.

Moreover, people who have poor coordination in their off-hand or whose reflexes are slow are at a distinct disadvantage, since this type of combat borders on the arcade in quality. I have gone on at length about this point because — let's face it — much of your time in any CRPG is spent fighting monsters. So important an activity requires a well-designed interface and that is where the *EOB* series is at its weakest. It is the only major weak spot, but it's a big spot. The games would be more enjoyable and less frustrating, if the combat engine were overhauled to make it less of an exercise in dual-hand coordination.

On the bright side, there *have* been some improvements made since the last game. Not only does *Darkmoon* have a fancy beginning, but it also has a fancy ending. You needn't worry about another infamous "drop to DOS" here. This time around, there is a big finale to sit back and watch. Further, when all the razzle-dazzle is over, the game automatically makes a final save for you (called FINAL.SAV, in fact), so your characters are tucked away with all the experience they've earned, ready to go on to the next one in the series.

As mentioned earlier, *Darkmoon* has more puzzles, although fortunately none of them are like the "Beholder bonuses." Most can be solved by a combination of inspection and trial and error. You can experiment to your heart's content, because now there are five (or six, if you use the Quick Start Party slot) save positions in the game.

The majority of problems relate to fiddling with pressure plates, levers, and buttons, but there are a couple of instances where you have to deal with pits that open and close. These are extremely annoying, since your timing here must be exact, and you have to move fast (but not too fast). Outside of certain combats, these gave me more trouble than anything else. While the game is linear in progression, the design is fairly open, and you can always return to an earlier area in any of the towers or underground. So, if you happened to miss picking up an important item somewhere, you can go back to a previous location to search for it. The way everything is laid out, it's almost impossible to find yourself painted into a corner with no exit.

The one possible exception is the green crystal hammer (which looks like an axe when it's lying on the ground, for some reason). There is a note in the game box with the warning that you *must* have this hammer before taking the mark of Darkmoon. I have heard from some players that you can, in fact, make your way back to the beholder level (yes, there are several in the game) to obtain the hammer, but did not try that myself. To be on the safe side, and make life easier, get the hammer *before* you leave.

Overall, *Eye of the Beholder II: Legend of Darkmoon* is a more substantial game than its predecessor. There is more to do, a bigger variety of critters to fight and a larger area to explore. Graphics are a bit finer than in *EOB I*. Sound effects are about the same. Some of the problems with the earlier game (poor ending, lack of save positions) have been fixed, although the combat interface remains a sore point. If you enjoyed the first game, you will definitely like this one. **CGW**

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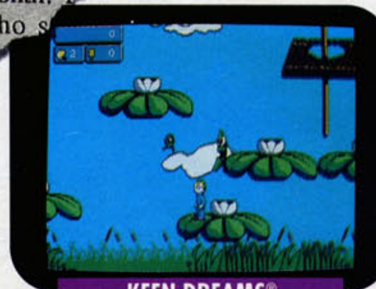
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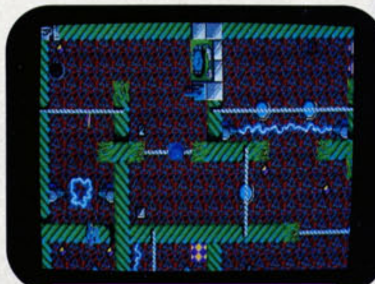
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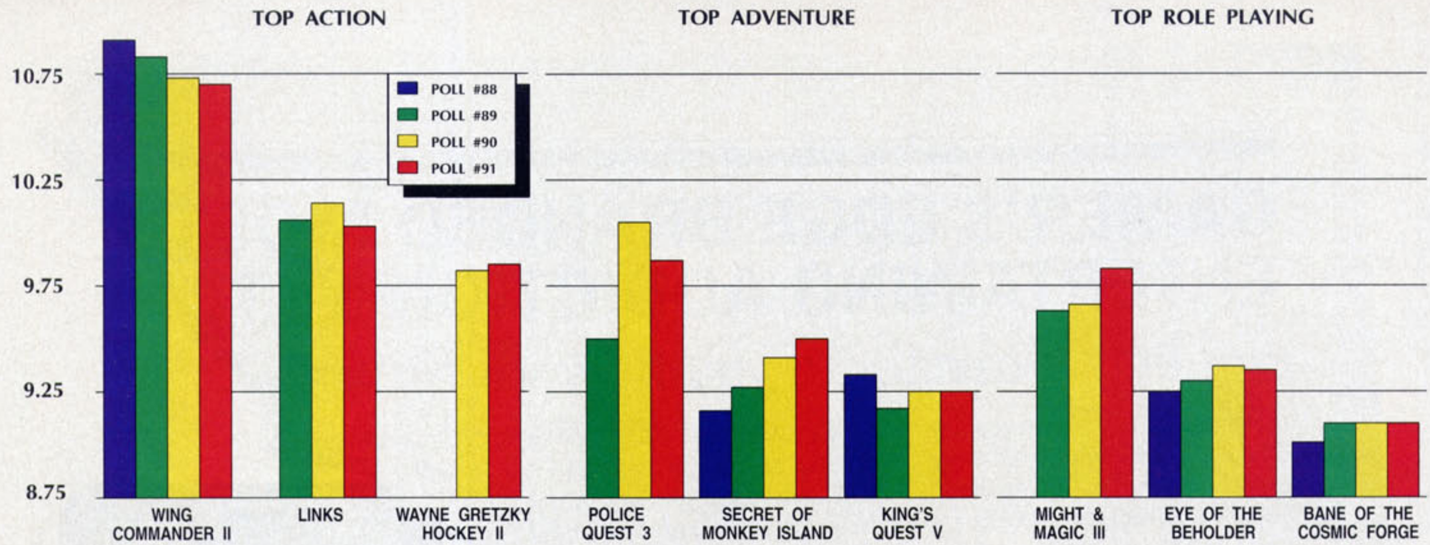
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Action/Arcade (AC):
Computer games that emphasize hand-eye coordination and reflexes.

Adventure (AD):
Games that allow you to take an alter ego through a storyline or series of events.

Role-Playing Adventure (RP):
Adventure games that are based on character development (usually involving attributes).

Top Ten Games

Game Title, Rating
Source, Category

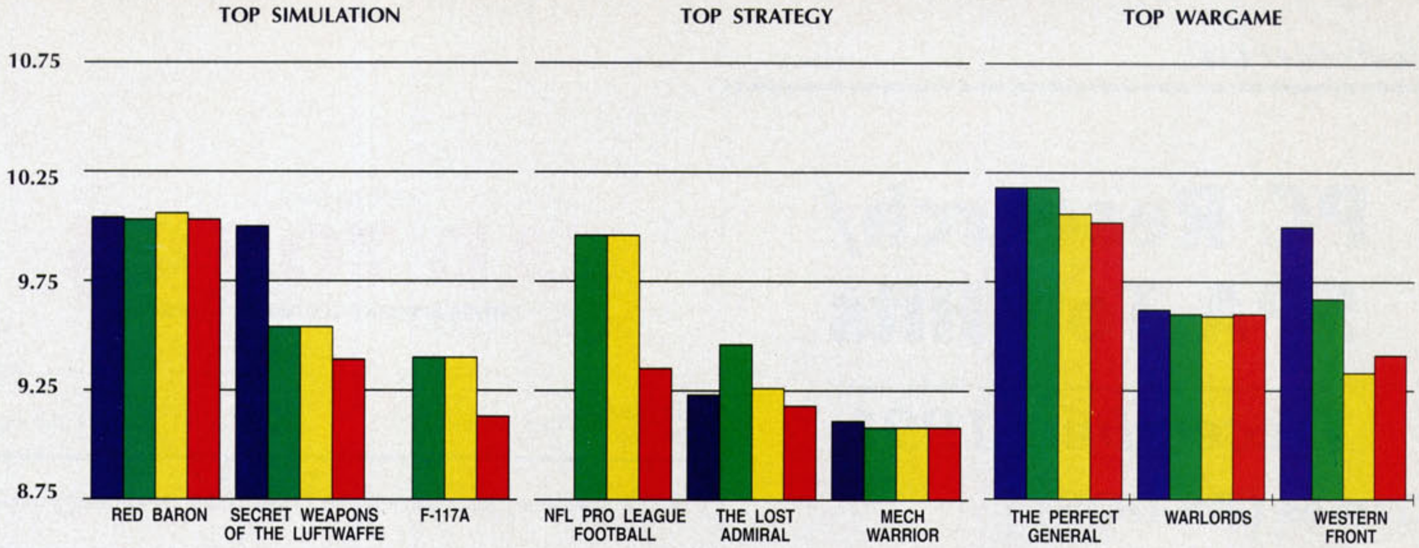
No.	Game Title / Source	Category	Rating
1	**Wing Commander II** Origin	AC	10.70
2	**Red Baron** Dynamix	SI	10.03
3	**Links** Access	AC	10.03
4	**The Perfect General** QQP	WG	10.02
5	**Police Quest 3** Sierra	AD	9.87
6	**Wayne Gretzky Hockey II** Bethesda Softworks	AC,ST	9.85
7	**Might & Magic III** New World Computing	RP	9.83
8	**Warlords** SSG	WG,ST	9.60
9	**Secret of Monkey Island** Lucasfilm	AD	9.50
10	**Lemmings** Psygnosis	AC	9.48

Three high ranking games are being inducted into the CGW Hall of Fame this month: one from Microprose (Sid Meier's ***Railroad Tycoon***); and two from Origin Systems (Lord British's ***Ultima VI*** and Chris Roberts' ***Wing Commander***). These three games join an impressive list of the industry's finest. ➤

The CGW

No.	Name	Source	Category	Rating
11	Western Front	SSI	WG	9.41
12	Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe	Lucasfilm	SI	9.39
13	Eye of the Beholder	SSI	RP	9.35
	NFL Pro League Football	Micro Sports	ST	9.35
15	King's Quest V	Sierra	AD	9.25
16	The Lost Admiral	QQP	ST	9.18
17	Wings	Cinemaware	AC	9.14
18	F-117A	Microprose	SI	9.13
19	Second Front	SSI	WG	9.12
20	Quest for Glory II	Sierra	AD,RP	9.11
21	Bane of the Cosmic Forge	Sir-Tech	RP	9.10
	PGA Tour Golf	Electronic Arts	AC	9.10
23	Mech Warrior	Activision	ST,SI	9.08
	Silent Service II	Microprose	SI	9.08
25	No Greater Glory	SSI	WG	9.07
26	Battlehawks 1942	Lucasfilm	AC,SI	9.05
27	Chuck Yeager's Air Combat	Electronic Arts	SI	9.04
	Red Storm Rising	Microprose	SI	9.04
	Gunship 2000	Microprose	SI	9.04
30	Command HQ	Microplay	WG,ST	9.00
	Quest for Glory	Sierra	RP	9.00
32	Ultima V	Origin	RP	8.99
33	Space Quest IV	Sierra	AD	8.98
34	Space Quest III	Sierra	AD	8.97
	Sword of Aragon	SSI	WG,ST	8.97
36	Powermonger	Electronic Arts	ST	8.96
37	Wasteland	Electronic Arts	RP	8.95
38	Pools of Darkness	SSI	RP	8.94
39	Overrun	SSI	WG	8.93
40	Falcon	Spectrum Holobyte	SI	8.90
41	Jack Nicklaus Unlimited Golf	Accolade	ST	8.89
	Martian Dreams	Origin	RP	8.89
	Tony LaRussa's Ultimate Baseball	SSI	AC,ST	8.89
44	NFL Challenge	XOR Corporation	ST	8.87
45	Romance of the 3 Kingdoms	Koei	ST,RP	8.86
46	Indianapolis 500	Electronic Arts	SI	8.85
47	Populous	Electronic Arts	ST	8.84
48	Elvira	Accolade	RP	8.82
49	Might & Magic II	New World	RP	8.81
	Rules of Engagement	Mindcraft	ST	8.81
	The Adventures of Willy Beamish	Dynamix	AD	8.81
52	The Magic Candle	Mindcraft	RP	8.80
	LHX Attack Chopper	Electronic Arts	AC	8.80
	Rise of the Dragon	Dynamix/Sierra	AD	8.80
	Tracon	Wesson International	ST	8.80

Games are often listed in more than one category. In this case, the first listed category is considered primary. In order



Simulation (SI):
Games based on first-person perspectives of real-world environments.

Strategy (ST):
Games that emphasize strategic planning and problem-solving.

Wargames (WG):
Simulations of historical or futuristic warfare from a command perspective.

Poll

➤ The recent strong showing by sports games has prompted a new category. It will start next month, along with a new feature: "The Most Played Game." Last month a new question began in the Poll: "What computer game have you spent the most hours playing in the past 30 days?" Look for the first results next month.

No.	Name	Source	Category	Rating
56	Gateway to the Savage Frontier	SSI	RP	8.79
57	Bard's Tale III	Electronic Arts	RP	8.77
58	Megafortress	Three-Sixty	SI,ST	8.76
59	Bandit Kings	Koei	ST,RP	8.75
	Heart of China	Dynamix	AD	8.75
	Martian Memorandum	Access	AD	8.75
62	Covert Action	Microprose	AC,AD	8.73
63	Battles of Napoleon	SSI	WG	8.72
	Battlechess	Interplay	ST	8.72
65	Breach 2	Omnitrend	ST,RP	8.71
	Starflight II	Electronic Arts	RP	8.71
67	Neuromancer	Interplay	AD	8.70
68	F-15 Strike Eagle II	Microprose	SI	8.69
69	Typhoon of Steel	SSI	WG	8.67
	Curse of the Azure Bonds	SSI	RP	8.67
71	Indiana Jones/Graphic Adv.	Lucasfilm	AD	8.65
	Ballistyx	Psygnosis	AC	8.65
73	Action Stations	RAW Entertainment	WG	8.64
	Conan the Cimmerian	Virgin	AC,RP	8.64
75	Armada 2525	Interstel	ST	8.63
76	Wayne Gretzky Hockey	Bethesda	AC,ST	8.62
77	Pool of Radiance	SSI	RP	8.61
78	King's Quest IV	Sierra	AD	8.59
	Wide World of Sports Boxing	Data East	AC	8.59
80	Buck Rogers	SSI	RP	8.57
81	Chessmaster 2100	Software Toolworks	ST	8.56
82	Tony LaRussa's Ultimate Baseball	SSI	ST,AC	8.55
83	Genghis Khan	Koei	ST,RP	8.54
84	Future Wars	Interplay	AD	8.53
85	Panzer Strike	SSI	WG	8.51
	Leisure Suit Larry III	Sierra	AD	8.51
	Sword of the Samurai	Microprose	ST,RP	8.51
88	The Games: Winter Challenge	Accolade	AC,SI	8.50
89	Savage Empire	Origin	RP	8.48
90	Champions of Krynn	SSI	RP	8.45
	Jetfighter II	Velocity	SI	8.45
92	Manhunter 2	Sierra	AD	8.42
93	Nobunaga's Ambition II	Koei	ST,RP	8.40
94	TV Sports Football	Cinemaware	AC,ST	8.39
	Patton Strikes Back	Broderbund	WG	8.39
96	Strike Fleet	Electronic Arts	WG	8.37
97	4-D Boxing	Electronic Arts	AC	8.36
98	Fire Brigade	Panther	WG	8.34
99	BattleTech II: Revenge	Infocom	WG,RP	8.33
100	Rocket Ranger	Cinemaware	AC,AD	8.32

Hall of Fame

The Games in CGW's Hall of Fame Have Been Highly Rated by our Readers over Time. They are Worthy of Play by All.

Bard's Tale I
Chessmaster
Dungeon Master
Earl Weaver Baseball
Empire
F19 Stealth Fighter
Gettysburg
Gunship
Harpoon
Kampfgruppe
King's Quest V
M-1 Tank Platoon
Mech Brigade
Might & Magic
M.U.L.E.
Pirates
Railroad Tycoon
SimCity
Starflight
Their Finest Hour
Ultima III
Ultima IV
Ultima VI
War in Russia
Wing Commander
Wizardry

to be recognized as the "Top Game" in a given category, a game must be listed as being primarily of that specific type.

PC Research/ SPA Top Hits

December, 1991

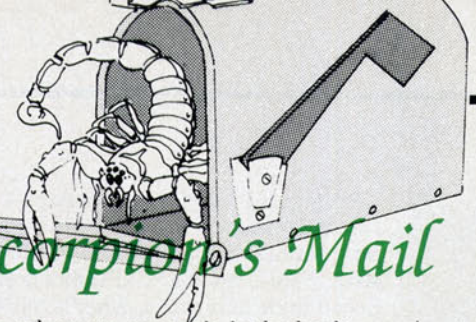
Games (MS-DOS)

Rank	Title and Source
1	*Police Quest 3* (Sierra On-Line)
2	*Mike Ditka Ultimate Football* (Accolade)
3	*Leisure Suit Larry V* (Sierra On-Line)
4	*Robin Hood — Conquest of the Longbow* (Sierra On-Line)
5	*Civilization* (Microprose)
6	*Chessmaster 3000* (Software Toolworks)
7	*F-117A Stealth Fighter* (Microprose)
8	*King's Quest V* (Sierra On-Line)
9	*Wing Commander II* (Origin)
10	*Flight Simulator 4.0* (Microsoft)
11	*Links* (Access)
12	*Eye of the Beholder II* (Strategic Simulations)
13	*Wing Commander II: Special Operations 1* (Origin)
14	*Adventures of Willy Beamish* (Sierra On-Line)
15	*Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe* (Lucasfilm)
16	*Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe Expansion Disk* (Lucasfilm)
17	*Gunship 2000* (Microprose)
18	*Lemmings* (Psygnosis)
19	*Castles* (Interplay Productions)
20	*Wordtris* (Spectrum HoloByte)

Home Education (MS-DOS)

Rank	Title and Source
1	*Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego?* (Broderbund)
2	*Where in the U.S.A. is Carmen Sandiego?* (Broderbund)
3	*SimCity* (Maxis)
4	*Where in America's Past is Carmen Sandiego?* (Broderbund)
5	*Where in Time is Carmen Sandiego* (Broderbund)
6	*Math Blaster Plus* (Davidson)
7	*Treehouse* (Broderbund)
8	*Kid Pix* (Broderbund)
9	*Sim Ant* (Maxis)
10	*Reader Rabbit II* (Learning Company)

This list is based on units sold by Software Etc., Babbages, Waldensoftware and Electronics Boutique. For more information, please contact PC Research at (703) 435-1025. CGW



Scorpion's Mail

So here we are again in the back room, which is as cluttered as ever. Spring is just around the corner (eek! already?), so maybe Fred and I will do a little cleaning one of these days — if I ever find the time for it. Not too much, though; there's a sort of distinction in having a room decorated in Post Office Modern and Fred *does* like having a place where he can (ahem) sack out (grin). But enough of that, let's move to the important stuff.

However, before we get to the mail sacks, there are a couple of items to mention. Once again (sigh), I have to remind people who live in the United States to enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope with their help requests. Too many letters have come in since the holidays without that vital enclosure. I don't like to put aside pleas for assistance from fellow adventurers, but ... no SASE, no reply. Please remember to enclose one when you write.

And now, *good news for IBM/compatible and Macintosh owners!* **Activision**, rising like a phoenix (we hope!) from the bankrupt ashes of **Mediagenic**, has re-issued twenty, count 'em, twenty, classic **Infocom** text adventures, all in one big package! This is the *real stuff*! The original games, with (ahem) all the words! Yay! (Okay Scorp, calm down a little....) Whew! Anyway, this has to be the biggest bargain to come along in years. After having to tell readers for so long that the only way to get old **Infocoms** was to go through long and tedious (and usually frustrating) searches, it's a pleasure to announce that they are now available again (well, at least if you have an IBM or Macintosh).

There are some great ones in this package: the entire *Zork* series, the *Enchanter* trilogy, *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, *Lurking Horror*, *Starcross*, *Planetfall*, *Stationfall* and *Suspended* (still, to my mind, the toughest **Infocom** I ever played), as well as several in the mystery series (*Deadline*, et al).

In addition to the games themselves, you also get detailed maps for most of the adventures and a giant book of hints and answers (this is mainly a collation of all the old *Invisiclues*, but without the need for a special marker to reveal the hints). So, you have absolutely everything you need to play the games, all in one package. Wow!

There is a special installation routine that will put to hard disk as many or as few of the games as you like, and it can be run any time to install more. This is handy when disk space is tight, or if you've already played some in the past. Even better, because these are mainly text adventures (Zork Zero does have some graphics), you don't need a lot of RAM, or fancy graphics adapters, or extended memory or a top-of-the-line computer to play them.

The IBM box even includes both 5.25 and 3.5 disks, so you're covered, whatever floppy drive you have. So, for all of you out there who've been looking for **Infocom**, run, do not walk, to your local software outlet and ask for *The Lost Treasures of Infocom* from **Activision**.

And now, on to the mail!

Elvira II: In my article last time, I mentioned that there seemed to be no way of turning off the music. Since then, I have learned of an undocumented command that will do just that: press **Alt-M**. So, you can discard your earmuffs (or plug your sound card back in) and use that when the music gets to be a bit much. Also, another dead end to watch out for: resurrecting the priest should be the *last* thing you do before the showdown with Cerberus. Don't bring him back to life until you have collected *all* the necessary items and returned to the Shaman the objects he requested. Otherwise, you won't be able to finish the game.

Might & Magic III: A lot of people are having trouble in the Fortress of Fear. I have to say, that one is a bit annoying. It works like this: there are eight heads and sixteen levers. That's two levers for each head: one makes a head appear and the other makes it disappear (always the same two levers per head). You have to run back and forth and discover which levers work which heads (that's a lot of running around). Then, once you know all that, you have to work the necessary levers to make just the corner heads appear (that's what the "when only the corners moan" clue refers to). What happens after that, I'll leave you to figure out; it should be pretty obvious.

Monkey Island II (LeChuck's Revenge): A new game (at least as I write this), but questions are starting to trickle in (well, it *is* tougher than the last one; watch for a Tale next issue). The spitting contest is giving some people a hard time. Well, you need three things. One, you have to work up a good phlegm. (Have you noticed that whenever spit is shown, it's always *green*?) Two, you need a good wind (keep an eye on the crowd). Three, you have to cheat (a little distraction helps here). When all these are put together, our boy Guybrush should have no trouble walking away with first prize.

Eye Of The Beholder: Continuing with the series of hints for the Beholder bonuses: On level 11, look for the room with the levers (this is where you find the Dwarven healing potion). You will have to work these levers twice. Once to make something appear in the niche, and the second time, to trigger the bonus. On your second go-round, you need to place a clerical item in the niche. Then, fool with the levers (it will take a while) until two in the same relative positions are different from the others. On level 7, the bonus is related to the three niches opposite the stone portal. You need to put something in each niche. Consider where these niches are and what you have to use may become apparent.

Spellcasting 201: Some people are having trouble with completing the first frat assignment of climbing the statue and affixing the mustache. They figure they know where the spell is that they need, they just can't get it. Well, some things may not be breakable, but there's always hack'n'slash. Just *apply* yourself to the problem, and you may find a gem of an answer.

Time Quest: Fun and games in the harem, but not for everyone. Finding out who's fooling around with one of the wives and which wife, can be a headache. Actually, we all know it has to be the Vizier, because there isn't anyone else. Proving it, however, is another matter. He sure does like those figs, eh? And there has to be *some* reason why the wives leave their clothing behind when they go to the baths. Save the game and experiment. (It's always the same wife.)

Conquests of the Longbow: Rescuing the widow's sons is a tricky matter. You can't just go barging in (although you'd think a hero like Robin Hood could easily take out a pair of guards) and trying to sneak in to get the boys out while the guards are away won't work. There isn't enough time for that. What you need to do is make sure the guards will be away for awhile. One of them is certainly thirsty. Well, you know what Robin is supposed to be famous for (thief that he is), now go do it.

And that's about it for this look into the mailbag. Remember, if you need help with an adventure game, you can reach me in the following ways:

On Delphi: Visit the GameSIG (under the Groups and Clubs menu). *On GEnie:* Stop by the Games RoundTable (type: Scorpia to reach the Games RT). *By US Mail:* (Remember that SASE if you live in the US!): Scorpia, P.O. Box 338, Gracie Station, New York, NY 10028.

Until next time, happy adventuring! **cgw**



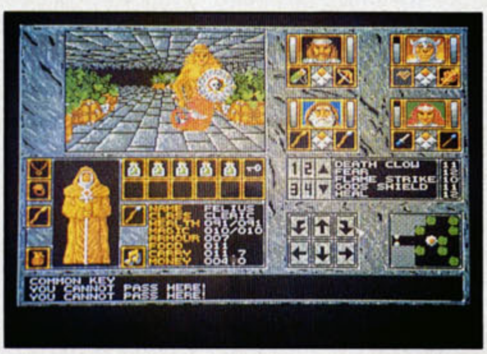
Over There

Role Up!

by Paul Rigby

Role-playing games form a large part of this month's column, ranging from all over the European arena. First on the list is *Abandoned Places*, from the UK outfit known as **Electronic Zoo**. However, the guys who actually produced the game come from Hungary.

Played with a first-person perspective, in classic *Dungeon Master* style, *Abandoned Places* (*AP*) is divided into three main portions: the countryside, the towns and the dungeons. Actually, judging by the early version, this game will not push any genre boundaries back. It does, however, add a few frills (the above-mentioned outer world portion of the game being one example) such as auto-mapping (although one has to earn it) and a varied set of scenery in the dungeons. The interface is very *Dungeon Master*-esque, sporting the four character portraits which can be clicked upon to gather more information, plus additional windows for directional commands, text output and so on.



Abandoned Places



Fate

The crux of the game is that old chestnut, the UBG (Ultimate Bad Guy). To get to him/it the party will need to wander through a myriad of interconnected quests and puzzles. Finally, the title of this game (which is touted to be very large indeed) appears to be a misnomer — the game world appears to be bursting at the seams with characters and monsters! *AP* is currently out on Amiga with other formats to follow.

Next on the CRPG listing is *Fate — Gates of Dawn*, from the German developer **Reline** and published by **Rainbow Arts**. *Fate* is another CRPG that is supposed to be enormous. What is this? A trend toward comparing games by stating, "We squeeze more square miles of dungeon into our CRPG than you can?"

Fate is another first-person perspective role-player for the Amiga (with IBM and Atari ST to follow). However, programmer Olaf Patzenhauer was determined that his game would not be like the rest. He states:

"First of all, the game is controlled by the computer in a systematic fashion. The player obtains important information during gameplay only by engaging the inhabitants and Mages in conversation. In time he encounters numerous puzzles that must be solved. *Fate* does not employ the much-abused question/answer trick — each puzzle must be solved step by step before each new adventure can begin."

The game centers around Winwood, a chap who owns a small record store on Fifth Street. Winwood falls asleep and is whisked away to a parallel world (look, blame the guy who wrote the manual). Then it's... find the UBG! Many of the aspects of *Fate* are standard fare. Races, though, include some interesting beings such as Zaraks (strong/dumb), Bes Zaraks (semi-human), morons(!), Errins (the demonic race), etc. The game world is split into (surprise!) wilderness, towns and dungeons. Travel does include maritime transport, however.

Fortunately, encounters do not have to be hostile. One can INTRODUCE, CHAT and even JOKE with non-player characters. Trading and information seeking can also be performed along with many *special* questions, such as being able to ask about the character's profession.

Combat includes a few different features such as: GROPE to grab the assailant, MOCK to irritate him and even DUPE to hit him from behind. In addition, the welcome feature of SPLITting the party into sub-groups (previously only seen in *The Magic Candle*) bodes well for playability.

Specifications include: nine dungeons with up to seven levels, four cities, up to four simultaneous parties totalling 28 characters, 32 character classes, 11 races, 200 spells, 80 animated character graphics and one or two surprises. For example, one of **Reline**'s other games is a graphic strip poker game called *Hollywood Pro*. Rumors are that one of

Reline's graphic artists "lost" one of the *Hollywood Pro* girls in *Fate*'s parallel world. Her, ahem, clothes never made the transition. So she's... cough... wandering around without... er.... Next!

The final CRPG for this issue is from the British software developer **Teque**. Their isometric CRPG *Shadowlands* is distributed by **Domark** in the UK. Using a four-character party, *Shadowlands* aims to be different by focusing on puzzle interaction. That is, as opposed to other CRPGs' strict party movement, *Shadowlands* encourages individual endeavors to solve puzzles and cooperation between party members to solve major puzzles for the benefit of the whole party.

Initially, the *Photoscape* process used by **Teque** introduces the first worry for the player. Light sources are a principle need in the game. Photoscape places concentric circles of decreasing light around the party or individuals and only illuminates that part of the dungeon, or whatever, that the light exposes, while the rest of the screen is shrouded in darkness. Controls are icon-driven, the gameplay is puzzle-oriented and the magic system is scroll-based. The game will appear (on Amiga first) during February.

Based on the European aviation success story, **Thalion** has just released *Airbus A320* for the Amiga (£29.99), with IBM to follow. Designed with the aid of a Lufthansa pilot, the emphasis is on reality. In fact, the principle competition for this product will be **Sublogic**'s *ATP*.

Before take-off, the player is required to fill out a flight plan. One must state the airport of departure and arrival and any stop-off points on the way. Passenger numbers must be stated as must any assigned freight and the quantity of fuel required. The player will also need to state whether flight will be via visual flight rules or solely on instruments.

Some of the Airbus controls included in the simulation are: left/right engine power, hold speed indicator, DME, VOR 1, VOR 2, NDB 1, IAS and actual air speed, relative and absolute bearing, plus all the other usual indicators.

Airbus promises to be a significant aviation product, complete with a wealth of technical and support documentation and, later, possible scenery disks et al.

Incidentally, anyone who would like to contact this writer can do so on CompuServe (75300,1503) or by mail to 20 Malvern Road, Liverpool, England, L6 6BW. (Please include three international reply coupons if you would like a reply.)

Note: The above games, and any of the other games mentioned in "Over There" in past issues, can be obtained from:
Computer Adventure World, 318 Kensington, Liverpool, England, L7 0EY. Telephone: 01144-51-263-6306.
Premier Mail Order, Trybridge Ltd., 8 Buckwins sq., Burnt Mills, Basildon, Essex, England, SS13 1BJ. Telephone: 01144-268-590-766; Fax: 01144-268-590-076.
Software City, Unit 4, BDC, 21 Temple Street, Wolverhampton, WV2 4AN. Telephone: 01144 902 25304; 24-hour credit card hotline: 01144 902 25304.

All of the above telephone numbers assume you can dial direct. If you have any trouble, contact the international operator. CGW





– Eric M. Hansen
Ft. Benning, GA

Letters From Paradise

Freak Previews

At the present time, February '92, I am still waiting for the *Star Trek: The 25th Anniversary* game to be released. I called the mail order people to see if I could change my order. *Wizardry 7* and *Planet's Edge* [are] my choices after *Star Trek*. They were also waiting to be released. All of these games, with the exception of *Planet's Edge*, have been covered by pseudo-reviews by your magazine. I was expecting the Christmas issue and maybe the November issue to be a good source when making my choice for Christmas gift software. I was wrong.

I guess the purpose of this letter is to ask you guys for better judgment when covering games and not to mislead us, the consumers, again and again by showing us software that will not be available in the near future.

By the way, I have been entertaining myself with **Omnitrend**'s *Rules of Engagement* since it was released. It received a lukewarm review on its "looks," but never a full-blown article. Here we have a definite classic, *on time*, and your magazine is somewhere counting your **Nintendo** cartridges.

I know you had an article on advertisement, late releases, etc. Maybe you should go find it and read it. By giving undue attention to software which is not yet out, you are doing a serious amount of damage to the industry.

Jose E. Lopez
San Juan, Puerto Rico

As noted in the first part of our Winter CES Report (see the second part in this issue), the accelerating pace of advances in digitized sound, three-dimensional technology and connectivity caused a veritable tidal wave of "slippage" in the entertainment software industry during 1991. By attempting to cover the "cutting edge" of that industry, CGW*'s editorial staff found themselves in a perpetual tug of war between sharing the exciting news of what was "on the way" and playing the cynical role of skeptic. In essence, we opted to err slightly on the side of excitement when writing Sneak Previews on works in progress, while holding our full critical broadsides for the Reviews and opinion articles which will come after the game is published. Writing about product delays when software publishers are working overtime in order to release products with the latest in technology would only serve to dampen our readers' spirits, anger publishers, allow other publications to appear to have a more inside track than we do and discourage our staff and writers (after all, finding out the latest and greatest revitalizes us when we feel overworked).*

Instead, we opted not for "pseudo-reviews," but for Sneak Previews. *These are clearly delineated feature articles about works in progress. This means that the design or graphics could change and production could be delayed after we cover the game. This turned out to be the case with* The Magic Candle II, *as the design team completely redrafted the graphics so that they would be VGA instead of EGA.* Ultima VII *presented a different problem, as the design team is integrating so many new technologies that they failed to consider how many things could go wrong when the new modules had to interface with each other. We had no way of knowing how long the delay would be when we presented the "Sneak Previews." On every occasion, we thought that they were a maximum of a month or two away. Nevertheless, we still believe that "Sneak Previews" are worthwhile, even before their time. We simply cannot see how they do any harm to the industry, any more than* **HBO**'s Behind The Scenes *or a* Premiere *magazine article about a Christmas movie would be damaging in a Spring issue.*

By the way, just to set the record straight, CGW *not only reviewed* Rules of Engagement *in issue #89, but presented full-length designer's notes in issue #84. We didn't think early coverage of that game was damaging, either.*

DisADvantageous

I find ad awards irrelevant, as ad quality is usually no indicator of game quality.

Ralf Grisard
Centerville, OH

Is this "Top Ad Award Ballot" really necessary?

Jeff Swartz
Longmont, CO

CGW *is not only read by computer gamers, it is also read by computer game designers and publishers. The* CGW Poll *gives computer gamers the chance to speak out on the quality of games and the* Top Ad Awards *give computer*

gamers the chance to speak out on the quality of the ads which often trigger their purchases.

As an illustration of how effective our readers' votes have been, we noticed a trend which followed our first Top Ad *competition. Prior to that competition, we had several full-page advertisements that had absolutely no screen shots of the games they advertised. After an advertisement with lavish use of screen shots won the competition, we noticed a concerted effort to place screen shots in almost all of the subsequent advertisements placed during the next couple of years. Such a consumer voice is certainly neither an exercise in the irrelevant nor a bone thrown to our advertisers at the readers' expense. It is part of our continual effort to cover the full spectrum of the entertainment software industry.*

Used Cart Lot

Why have I not seen any information on used games? Is there not a market for used games? Are there any places for me to sell my used games to?

Terry Hanna
Santa Barbara, CA

While there may eventually be a used cartridge game market and a used compact disc market (since games on such media cannot be copied easily), there is an inherent problem with advocating any type of market for used disk-based computer games. The problem, of course, is piracy. Even if a potential purchaser of a used game knows that he or she is purchasing a published, off-the-shelf version of a game, there is no real way to know whether the seller has kept a "pirated" copy on his/her hard disk or stored a "pirated" version of the game at home. So, even the most innocent purchaser cannot get away from the possibility of piracy when purchasing used games and even the most innocent seller cannot get away from the stigma of possible piracy when selling them. For this reason, there are very few outlets for the sale of used games.

There are, however, a few exceptions. Many computer flea markets allow individuals to unload computer games of which they have grown tired via consignment tables. In addition, many local and national game conventions will auction used copies of computer games along with used copies of board games and boxes of lead miniatures.

Dumping the Carts Before Remorse

I am tired of seeing a computer gaming magazine devote itself to reviewing cartridge-based games for **Nintendo** and **Sega Genesis**. There are enough mindless, worthless magazines publishing reviews of these games. You should stick to reviewing computer games because the people who buy your magazine buy it for the reviews of *computer* games. Try to do better before your loyal readers abandon you.

C. Hoage
Baltimore, MD

Now we know how Surfing *magazine felt when they ex-*

panded their coverage to include bodyboarding. The parallels between the kinds of letters they get (and those which skiing magazines get with regard to covering snowboarding) and the ones we continue to get on the occasional bonus videogame reviews we publish are incredible. A letter in the January '92 issue of Surfing *stated, "I know you're using the excuse of sharing the ocean. But if you take that thinking a little further, why not add sections for jet-skiers, little kids, fishermen, fat tourists, rental rafts, and other flotsam that are making most breaks an obstacle course?"*

Of course, we use the rationale that videogames are *computers and use, in some cases, exactly the same processors as other personal computers that we cover in our magazine. So, in a very real sense, computer gamers* do *share the same "ocean" with videogamers. However, we think the fact that many of the games we cover on the console front were* originally *personal computer games or happen to be the kind of games that many of our readers are interested in keeps us from reducing our coverage to the "rental raft" level (though this editor has certainly put in some time as a "fat tourist"). Of course, this doesn't seem to score any points with the anti-console crowd. Like skiers who can afford more expensive equipment than snowboarders and surfers who may be more coordinated than their less experienced bodyboarding cousins, the issue doesn't seem to focus on the coverage itself, but on a "snobbery factor" of which this editor was once a willing practitioner.* Computer Gaming World *has always been more concerned with the games themselves than with the platforms. We suspect that will* always *be the case.* **CGW**

Conversions Received

Battle Chess **(Interplay) MPC**

Break Point Pro Tennis **(Lance Haffner Games) IBM**

Jordan vs. Bird **(Electronic Arts) Game Boy**

King's Quest V **(Sierra) Macintosh**

MicroLeague Baseball **(MircoLeague Sports) Amiga**

Red Baron **(Dynamix) Amiga**

Super Tetris **(Spectrum Holobyte) MS Windows**

The Adventures of Willy Beamish **(Dynamix) Amiga**

Wordtris **(Spectrum Holobyte) Macintosh**

World Class Track & Field **(Lance Haffner Games) IBM**

The Software Toolworks Puts a Miracle into Music

The Miracle Piano Teaching System

by Jason R. Rich

On December 19, 1991, when Arsenio opened *The Arsenio Hall Show* late-night talk show by saying, "Let's get busy!" it was with music being performed by Herbie Hancock as he demonstrated *The Miracle Piano Teaching System*. While it is not unusual for musicians to use computers as a tool for creating their music, it takes something out of the ordinary for Arsenio to spend over six minutes on national television talking about a product.

The Miracle Piano Teaching System from **The Software Toolworks** is unique in that it uses artificial intelligence and computer games to teach just about anyone how to play the piano and read music. While Herbie Hancock certainly had no need for the tutorial aspects of the system, it is designed so that anyone can use the system and begin playing basic songs (like "Mary Had a Little Lamb") in under an hour.

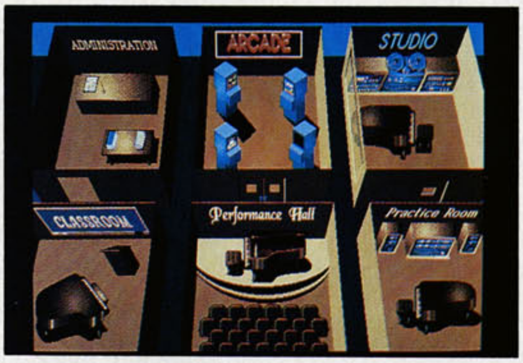
According to John Mandel, a member of the development team responsible for *The Miracle*, "We wanted to create a system that would teach people how to play the piano in a fun and interesting way. We wanted to make sure the student didn't get bored or frustrated." The result was a keyboard and video game cartridge developed originally for use with the **Nintendo Entertainment System** (NES). This system combined basic music theory with video games in order to teach music and keyboard to people of all ages without the fears usually associated with (gasp!) *piano lessons*. Now, an advanced version of *The Miracle* is available for use on IBM-compatible systems.

The IBM version of *The Miracle Piano Teaching System* consists of an electronic keyboard, custom software, a cable for connecting the keyboard to the computer's serial port and two short manuals. The basic system requirements for using *The Miracle* include: an IBM compatible, at least one serial port, PC-DOS or MS-DOS 3.1 (or higher), 512K RAM (with a CGA graphics adapter) or 640K RAM (with an EGA, VGA or Hercules graphics adapter). In addition, a hard disk, mouse and printer are recommended, but not required.

While the system may look intimidating coming out of the box, everything can be set up and running in less than 30 minutes.

Once the electronic keyboard is connected to the computer and the software is installed, the music lessons can begin. *The Miracle Piano Teaching System*'s software is divided into six sections (graphically depicted as rooms in a house). In the "Classroom," the computer will interact with the electronic keyboard and the user to teach 1,100 basic lessons, designed to proceed at the student's own pace. *The Miracle* is designed using advanced artificial intelligence techniques, which allow for true interaction with the student. Detailed instruction and critiques, based on the individual problems of the student, make this system unique.

After each Classroom lesson, students are encouraged to spend time in the "Practice Room" to review and practice each lesson before proceeding to the next. The computer will determine when the student should advance to the next lesson; however, it is possible for the student to override the computer tutor and jump to advanced lessons, ready or not.



One of the nicest features of *The Miracle* is that it incorporates easy-to-play games and colorful animated graphics into the teaching process. These games are not only entertaining and challenging, but they are also cleverly designed to reinforce the lessons taught in the Classroom. These action games are used as part of the Classroom lessons, but can also be used to practice when the student enters the "Arcade" portion of the program. In the Arcade, the student can play Ducks (a musical shooting gallery), Ripchord (an action game that reinforces note recognition, fingering and chord-playing technique) and Aliens! (a memory game that teaches musical note recognition). Within the Arcade, the Jukebox option can also be selected to hear the computer perform any of the 100 musical selections the student is taught during the course.

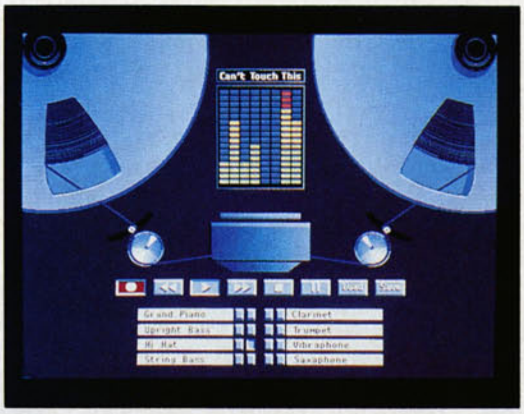
When specific musical pieces have been mastered, visiting the "Performance Hall" will allow the student to play with full orchestral accompaniment. While visiting the "Studio," students can record and play back their own music. This portion of the program simulates an eight-track recording studio.

The "Administration Room" is where the computer user can measure his or her progress as a student, add new students to the system's database and perform basic system maintenance functions. (Any number of students may be added to the database.)

These software modules are all graphically based and extremely easy to use. The majority of them are self-running and require little more than having the student press the Space Bar or Tab key at the appropriate times. Much of the interaction between the student and *The Miracle* is done by having the student play the electronic keyboard. The overall goal of the system is to teach the student how to read music, play the piano with two hands (using chords and common rhythms), pick up music and learn to play it on his or her own and play with other musicians.

Of course, all this takes plenty of time and practice. In spite of the product's clever design, it still requires that the student be motivated to use the system on an ongoing basis, both to learn the lessons and to practice. While the system is designed to be used by children and adults alike, parents (whether they play the piano or not) should consider working with their child, at least to complete the basic lessons. *The Miracle* system can replace a traditional human music teacher in many ways, but it cannot force the student to practice and it cannot ensure that the student is using the correct hand positions and finger movements. *The Miracle* can "listen" to the student play and analyze his or

her performance by looking for everything from bad timing or keys being held too long to the wrong notes being played, but it cannot correct those bad habits that have a way with catching up with lazy piano students.



Once students have completed *The Miracle* course successfully, they will understand the basics of playing the piano and reading music. They will have been taught all of the fundamentals, but for further instruction, turning to a professional music teacher for a few one-on-one lessons is almost inevitable.

Currently, *The Miracle Piano Teaching System* is available for the 8-bit NES for $379.95 plus the price of the NES. More advanced versions of the system are available for the 16-bit Super NES, the Amiga and IBM compatibles ($479.95 each). While the NES version of the system is excellent, the newer IBM, SNES and Amiga versions are more graphically oriented, contain more information and are far more elaborate. On the personal computer versions, the biggest advantage is that students can save their progress to disk and that the orchestral accompaniment is more complex.

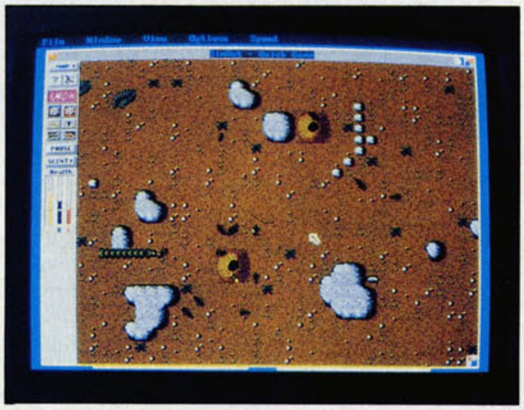
Along with more than 100 pre-programmed songs (and their appropriate accompaniment) that are built into the personal computer versions of *The Miracle*, optional song collections are available, containing 40 additional songs each. These songs can be incorporated into the teaching system, so students can be guided as they are introduced to the new musical selections (which may be more to their liking). *The Miracle Song Collections* are available on disk for $49.95 each. Two volumes are currently available. Conversion kits are also available for those who wish to use *The Miracle* with more than one type of video game or computer system. These conversion kits are priced at $129.95 each and include the appropriate cables, manuals and disks (or cartridges) along with instruction.

The Miracle Piano Teaching System is extremely easy to use, even for non-music- or non-computer-oriented people. In this reviewer's opinion, everything that **Software Toolworks** promises about this system is true, but nothing can replace the student's personal desire to play the piano and read music. While a student's progress can be seen within the first hour, it would take a true miracle for someone to play like Herbie Hancock or any other professional musician without putting in years, maybe decades of work. The computer games incorporated into this system, along with the graphic user interface, take much of the boredom and fear out of learning and practicing. Nevertheless, no matter how good the system is, there is still no substitute for parental involvement. **CGW**

How the Yard Was Won

A SimAnt *Replay*

by Allen Varney



As a kid, I sold seeds door to door, earning one of the seed company's neater premiums, an ant farm. I set up the modules, thin worlds sandwiched between clear plastic, and connected them with flexible tubes. But I never collected residents. Apathy? Reluctance to imprison guiltless ants? Now Maxis has produced *SimAnt: The Electronic Ant Colony* to show what fun I missed.

As the company points out, though, real ants were never this fun. A viewer can't pause a real anthill, nor shift to cutaway views, nor lead black ants in wars against rival reds. When real ants drive humans out of their house, one can't count it a personal victory.

The game beats real ants for education, too. That plastic colony might have taught two vital *SimAnt* principles, that food is everything and life is cheap, but it didn't include an online ant-fact database and it would never have taught the chief rules of anthood:

- Become a soldier as soon as possible.
- When necessary, turn into a spider.
- Ants, left alone, will conquer the world.

How did I learn these fascinating facts? Follow a full game and see.

The Thrill of Battle

Move the queen somewhere near the food supply, then click on her to set her digging a nest. (She's picky about sites, isn't she?) Another click, and she will lay eggs, starting with the yellow worker ant. Within seconds after birth, the worker should lay a pheromone trail to the nearest food supply. Once the black queen is fed and busily creating citizens, it's time to plot war against those nasty red ants a few feet away.

Tok-tok-tok-tok. "Oh no, it's that dratted spider!" Here's a subversive trick: exchange bodies with it. Click on the spider, then press the space bar to choose its behavior. Send it chasing after a red ant, all the way across the map. Once there, make it hunt. In theory, the spider could win this war all by itself, just in singleminded pursuit of red ants. Of course, this is a cheesy and displeasing way to win. It is much more exciting to use force of arms — of mandibles, that is.

To raise the army, set the Caste Control panel to 60 percent soldiers, 40 percent workers and no breeders. When the forces are four dozen strong, recruit them all and set out for the enemy nest. A slow approach lets these heroes pick off opponents one by one.

Aargh, the yellow ant has died. Quick! Once it's reborn, pause the game, move to the battle site and exchange bodies with a soldier. Then recruit the troops, so they don't forget their mission. Try to stay behind the front lines, surrounded by loyal guards.

When most of the red ants on the surface have perished, lead the charge into the nest. Unfortunately, soldiers like stealing food better than killing the red queen, so be patient. Don't use the "Silly" mode here — the word balloons, though delightful, obstruct the action. Soon, the red queen dies. Victory is ours!

This Means War

Set Caste Control to 60 percent soldiers, 30 percent workers, and 10 percent breeders. Wait half a minute or so. Then, move to the strategic map and begin the mating cycle. Then, back at the patch map, recruit everybody and set out for the spider. (The spider seems to especially love breeders.) Stay on its tail — er, abdomen — and chase it away or kill it.

Back on the strategic map, place the fertile queens manually in adjacent patches, one queen per quadrant (quadrANT?). Spend a minute or so watching the human and pets, then move to a new quadrant and look around. Funny how these ants do better without help!

When this new quadrant has five or ten breeders of each gender, start the mating cycle anew. Establish new patches in a solid line marching toward the house and the red territory. Then move to another quadrant and repeat.

To achieve the maximum score, chase out the humans before seriously tackling the red ants. This lets the black ants occupy every quadrant on the map, instead of just three-fourths of the house.

Hints from "Ant Hill"-ary

When new food appears, blaze a trail to it, then recruit all the ants around. Release them as they arrive, and they'll carry the food back to the nest.

Set an alarm scent around food, then recruit a few ants to garrison the spot. As red ants arrive, the guards kill them one at a time. This may starve the red ants.

Does the lawn mower annihilate you? Does a giant foot descend like a Monty Python routine? Too bad. There's not much to do except curse and cope.

Dead spiders eventually turn into a measly four food pellets, but only after a long, twitching wait. Once a spider dies, a replacement quickly arrives on the scene from Central Spider Dispatch.

Ignore the caterpillar. It's nutritious, but not worth the trouble of killing. (Just like real life.)

The "mystery button" might fill one end of the map with nests, create a whole bunch of ants, kill them, give the spider a fearsome death ray, or ask a riddle. Don't chance it unless you're desperate or frivolous.



Ant-cillary Humor Department: We were reminded of this amusingly appropriate excerpt from Roz Gibson's autobiographical comic strip "Tales from Valencia," reprinted, with permission, from issue #18 of *Yarf! – The Journal of Applied Anthropomorphics*. (Interested readers can reach them at P.O. Box 1299, Cupertino, CA 95015-1299.)

In assaulting a red quadrant, place five or six queens. After a time, sheer numbers will overwhelm the reds. It also helps to go in and send the spider romping merrily through the red ranks.

In this way, the whole yard soon becomes a crawling carpet of black ants. With a final score around five million, a winner garners **Maxis'** highest praise: "On a Mission From Elvis."

Lessons of War

Ants will conquer the world ... at least, in *SimAnt*. The game allows colossal victory for any first-time player using straightforward strategy. As a "software toy," *SimAnt* shows why ants are so widespread and so fascinating. As a game, this lightweight exercise ought to be the "easy" level, with higher levels of difficulty included. Unfortunately, they are not. Maybe **Maxis** should try simulating a life form that faces a tougher battle. How about *SimSnailDarter* or *SimCondor* or, for the really tough challenge, *SimDodo*? From there it's just a short step to, say, *SimGameDesigner* — but that way lies madness. **CGW**

"Calling Dick Tracy! Calling Dick Tracy!"

Walt Disney Software's Dick Tracy

By David M. Wilson



TITLE:	Dick Tracy: The Crime-Solving Adventure
SYSTEMS:	Amiga, IBM
PRICE:	$39.95 with Sound Source, $59.95
PROTECTION:	Code-Wheel Look-Up
DESIGNER:	Distinctive Software
PUBLISHER:	Walt Disney Software Burbank, CA



"Calling Dick Tracy! Calling Dick Tracy!" the famous detective's futuristic two-way wrist radio squeals. "There's big trouble," it continues. Tracy listens carefully to the report of a crime and gives his customary reply, "I'm on my way."

Fans of Dick Tracy can now step into the shoes of the famous comic strip detective with **Walt Disney Software**'s *Dick Tracy: The Crime-Solving Adventure.* Players are encouraged to rise through the ranks of the detective bureau by using their detective skills, as well as their arcade prowess, to solve a series of crimes. Big Boy Caprice is running the largest criminal organization that the city has ever seen. Tracy is assigned to catch all of the "little fish" in hopes of smoking out the "big fish."

Those familiar with the **Touchstone** movie will recognize an approach closer to the famous Warren Beatty incarnation of Tracy rather than the square-jawed comic strip caricature. Still, the program follows in the steps of the motion picture's art direction by trying to maintain the look and feel of Chester Gould's famous comic strip. Basic comic strip colors are used. Voice balloons are employed for dialogue. Pointer balloons indicate objects that might otherwise have been obscured. Enough attention is given to integrating the interface with comic strip authenticity that true fans should be very pleased.

Getting a Clue (Game Elements)

The first of the two major components of play is driving the squad car through the city. Detectives must steer their squad car through traffic, avoiding collisions with other cars and pedestrians. Naturally, each collision counts against the car's damage meter and damaging the car too much will mean that Tracy will have to walk to the station. In addition, the fact that the car doesn't run well when damaged means that executing a successful chase is practically impossible. Fortunately for some players, the game provides several police contract garages where Tracy's demolition derby squad car can be repaired.

Using the siren may become audibly annoying to both the player and anyone in the player's immediate environs, but such use is a necessary evil. Since players won't be penalized for unreasonable use of the siren and everyone (except for some villains) will yield right of way to the siren, it is wise to use it often.

The second of the major play components is shooting it out with the bad guys. Once the player has stopped a villain in his car (either by pulling him over or colliding with his car and running him off the road) or entered a villain's hideout, he will almost invariably find himself in a shootout with the villain, who shouts something like, "Eat lead, copper!" This arcade sequence is simple enough that even the most inept player can handle it. The only real difficulty Tracy may have is when he is outnumbered by extremely long odds. Dodging and shooting will usually enable him to chase a couple of the opposing gunsels away. Then, Tracy must pursue the head villain of the group into the sewers or onto the rooftops. Once he has shot the villain's strength down to nothing, the villain will surrender, leaving Tracy free to arrest or interrogate him.

Interrogation plays a major role in solving crimes. It is too bad that the player is not allowed to have more control over the interrogation phase, though. Instead, players are stuck with whatever facts the villain they are "grilling" wishes to give. Tracy may want to know where "The Brow's" hideout is, but will instead get information on what part of town Shoulders lives in. This becomes quite frustrating at times.

What is a mystery without clues? Tracy will find clues at the crime scene and at various criminal hideouts. Clues must be processed by the crime lab. As in real life, many of the clues will yield no pertinent information and Tracy will be informed that they were inconclusive. Sometimes, the clues are nonsensical items. For instance, one that kept popping up was a painting. Not once did the painting relate to a crime. It just never really made sense as the kind of clue Dick Tracy would be expected to pick up.

One major lead that Tracy uses in solving crimes is considering in what part of town a villain usually operates. Apparently, villains only commit crimes in their own part of town. Gangsters must have a tough union. At any rate, this concept keeps

players from facing a true challenge. So, crime-solving ends up being a process of elimination to determine which players live in what part of town (they move after every case).

Tracy has other tools to assist him, although they take even more challenge out of the game. He is permitted three "bugs" at the beginning of the game and allotted another "bug" each time he solves a case. These electronic devices are as futuristic as Tracy's two-way wrist radio because they don't just eavesdrop at the villain's hideout, they also detect criminal activity. Once they detect criminal activity, they alert Tracy and he can respond to the scene. This reviewer honestly played through the adventure without even using the bugs, but many players will want to add them to their arsenal as insurance. A special agent replants the bugs in the criminal's new hideout after each case. Surprisingly, he seems to know where the criminal's new hideout is, even though Tracy doesn't, pardon the expression, have a clue.

Along the way, Tracy will need some allies. Pat Patton can be found in the Squad Room and he can offer players advice on how to proceed on a dead-end case. Breathless Mahoney has a dressing room at Club Ritz (on Fifth Street) and will give one clue per case, if consulted. The "kid" (a newsboy) moves around frequently, but he generally will have "the word on the street" or a piece of evidence for Tracy.

A good detective must consider his health. When Tracy's health meter gets low he can stop off at Mike's Diner (on Ninth Street) for a bowl of Mike's wonder chili. Mike's chili is said to have great therapeutic effect on a detective's ailing health. In addition, Tracy's girlfriend, Tess Trueheart, is quite handy with iodine and bandages. A visit to her apartment (on First Street) will also improve Tracy's health.

Saving the Day (Game Objectives)

The goal of the game is to advance through the four ranks in the detective bureau, which range from Detective Junior Grade to Chief of Detectives. Naturally, players will be promoted for solving a case. They can also be demoted for letting Tracy's health drop so far that he goes to the hospital, arresting the wrong person or arresting criminals without sufficient evidence.

If Tracy is able to solve several crimes, Big Boy Caprice will kidnap Tess Trueheart and challenge Tracy to come after him at the Club Ritz. Tracy must not only catch Big Boy, but must also save Tess. This is the only arcade segment that has a time limit.

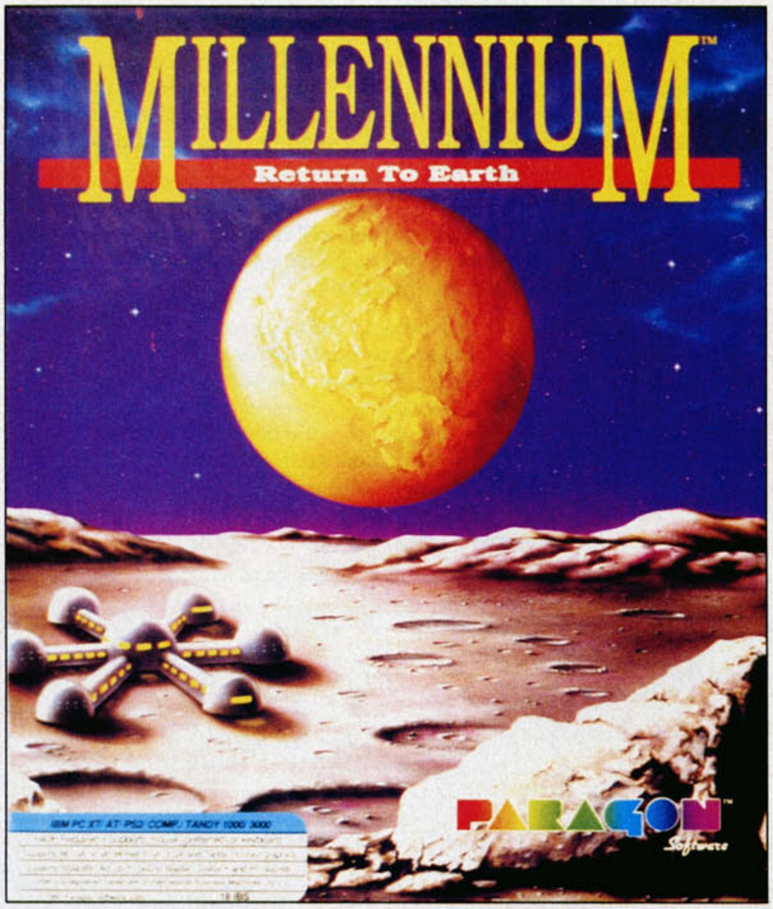
Players will be wise (as with most computer games) to use the save game feature frequently. Even though the arcade segments are not really very difficult, players will occasionally lose a raging gun battle. A save should most definitely be used before the final confrontation with Big Boy Caprice.

Dick Tracy: The Crime-Solving Adventure offers an interesting blend of action and puzzle. It certainly offers a different type of game. If the puzzles were a bit more oriented toward hard evidence (fingerprints, photos, eyewitnesses, etc.), the game would be greatly improved. Instead, the constant arcade action combined with the juvenile puzzles keep the game from rising to its full potential. Unfortunately, the game is too easily mastered. In fact, the limited difficulty may be the only demerit in a cleverly conceived game. CGW

Give or Take a Thousand Years

A Review of Millennium

by Alan Emrich



January, 2200 AD

There's a new moon out tonight. It's not that the people on Earth are looking up into the night sky and seeing the dark side of the moon.... No, it's the colonists on Earth's Lunar Base who cannot see the people on the Earth. Devastated by impact with a 20-trillion-ton hunk of space debris which plowed straight into the planet and penetrated to the magma core, the Earth just isn't what it used to be. Efforts to stop the behemoth object utterly failed, and the ecological consequences of the disaster would vindicate every environmental extremist on the planet (just before killing them all).

The Earth was rendered uninhabitable.

As life ebbed away on the planet, choking on poisonous, sulfuric gases, civilization (and a lot of other computer games, no doubt) ceased to exist. The one hundred lunar colonists who helplessly watched the apocalypse are humanity's last hope at reestablishing life on Terra. Since Terra is no longer "firma," however, much remains to be done around the entire solar system before Earth will be ready to be reinhabited and made "home" once again.

Barking at the Moon

TITLE:	Millennium
SYSTEMS:	IBM, Amiga
REVIEWED:	IBM
COPY PROTECT:	None
PRICE:	59.95
DESIGNER:	Ian Bird
PUBLISHER:	Paragon Software
DISTRIBUTOR:	Microprose Hunt Valley, MD

B.C., "Before the Calamity," the player was merely the commander of Lunar Base 1, a small research station on the moon's Sea of Tranquility. With terraforming still a science in its infancy, it is quickly apparent that the resources of the moon alone will not be enough to achieve the recolonization of Earth. In fact, every planet in the solar system will need to be probed for its viability as a mining colony. Likely prospects will need to be settled (and protected), their resources returned to the moon and much research and development will have to be done before Earth can once again be called "home."

Postcards from Space

There are seven locations on *Millennium*'s Lunar Base 1. They are arranged as six "stations" (colonies are all similar with only four stations) connected to a central docking bay where, naturally, ships take off and land, and into and out of which cargo is moved. Additionally, on the moon, a bunker can be built under the docking bay, where scarce commodities and precious resources can be moved out of harm's way.

The six stations include a life support station containing population "nodules," each of which holds 100 people. The game begins with a single nodule operating to capacity, but five more can (and will need to) be built during the game. Population does two things: it allows ships to be crewed and, when a colony is established, it allows mining to commence when there are at least fifty people on a planet. Fortunately, the birth rate is phenomenal. (A single person, it seems, can become about 20 people in less than a year — nice work, if you can get it.)

An Energy station also exists on Lunar Base 1, and each colony, when established. Solar panels provide each colony's energy (or, if destroyed, the colony can subsist on batteries indefinitely). Of course, huge, multi-paneled generators don't return nearly as much energy as the colonies orbit further from the sun.

The Resource station, another feature of each colony, requires 30 kilowatts of power and can be switched on like a light. Once running, it stockpiles resources for transportation (or, on the moon, production) automatically. Each colony, as well as Lunar Base 1, also has a Defense station. It is here that fighters and orbital lasers become operational when a location is under attack and where the damage, if any, will be reported.

Lunar Base 1 has two exclusive stations, the first one being a Research station. Before anything can be built or any planet colonized, it must be researched. Unfortunately, research of any item is ridiculously fast — after the early segments of the game are completed, one's scientists sit around on their hands waiting for something, *anything*, to study. The final, and by far the most important, station on Luna Base 1 is the Production station. It is the only place where new items can be built and they must be built one at a time. A player must keep the lights burning every day at the Production station, because it is not possible ever to have enough defenses to repulse attacks or enough transport ships flying the merchant lanes.

Solar Operating System

The mechanics of *Millennium* are a breeze. A handful of icons with some mouse clicking, much like *Virgin*'s *Overlord*, and zoom, players are on their way. Not only is the interface akin to *Overlord*, but so is the graphic perspective of the game. The screen designs are remarkably similar in feel to *Overlord*'s.

Where *Millennium* has its big advantage on *Overlord* is that

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play is *not* "real time." Making it more of a strategy game, designer Ian Bird has opted to move time whenever a player pushes an icon. In this manner, time will either advance a single hour (useful for landing spacecraft) or one day (where rapid, multiple clicking generates a sort of player-controlled "warp speed"). Occasionally the computer ticks off an hour on its own, but that "real time" element in the game is completely negligible.

Players will get into the meat of *Millennium* quickly for one very good reason: the icons pretty well spell everything out. This is particularly good, because the documentation is a masterpiece of understatement. With the help of the former rather than the latter, players will find themselves exploring both the limits of the solar system and the limits of the game system in practically no time.

What Do the 'Little Green Men' Know?

Players begin by researching more powerful solar generators and launching probes to every planet and moon in the solar system. These probes will disappear around Mars, however, as one quickly discovers that there are hostile Martians out there. This is somewhat unfortunate for those who simply want to build lunar colonies as in **Wesson International**'s *Moonbase*, because it means that one spends much of the game preparing every base and colony to defend against Martian raids.

Then, as worlds are discovered and the choice ones settled, "ancient artifacts" will start to appear in a predestined manner to give the player the key to the next step in the game. Sudden "carrier" technology will allow for the conquest of Mars, for instance. Naturally, Mars has a key technology required for terraforming Earth, but moving colonists over requires *another* discovery. Well, the astute reader will see a pattern here. This is what is known as an "adventure game" storyline. Linear, with but one conclusion, a player must have the correct key before opening the next door.

"It's what we call a 'Shake and Bake' colony."

Colonies are nice, but players will have to be picky about creating them. Certain key elements are not produced by the moon or easily mined from the asteroid belt by automated "Grazer" ships. Find those elements and plant as few colonies as possible, because the fewer there are, the easier they are to protect.

As for interstellar travel... it certainly leaves one's merchant marine with plenty of time to kill. This is because it takes over a year, sometimes, to travel from the moon to the furthest reaches of the solar system (depending on the alignment of the planets). That's a long time for a one-way trip, but successful players will soon recognize that many of the promising colony sites are a long distance away.

During the game, a player will spend much of the time with the mundane tasks of playing "space traffic controller" and "docking bay manager." There is a 10-click sequence for landing and preparing to load and unload a ship which achieves orbit around a planet, for instance, which quickly becomes as rote as typing one's own name. Surely some more development time could have automated more of this mundane gameplay element, but it really isn't so bad for the detail-minded person. The middle portion of the game, however, can get pretty busy for the player who has a lot to shuffle around.

Another bit that will seem like "busywork" for some is the defense of colonies. When they are under attack, a player who has any defenses must rush to them (since advancing time is prohibited until the attack is resolved). With two weapons at a player's disposal (assuming they've been researched, built and transported to the area under attack), a player can fire an orbital laser and/or launch fighters. Orbital lasers fire automatically, knocking down attackers but expending themselves permanently in the process. Fighters are a reusable resource (assuming, of course, that some survive to reuse). However, fighter defenses activate an arcade game sequence called "zap the pseudo-spaceship-looking polygon" which might annoy a strategy gamer. Fortunately, this reviewer found the fighter's arcade combat sequence easily manageable and so it did not detract from the more engrossing strategy elements of *Millennium*.

The Universe Is Fixed!

Moving elements back to the moon, protecting the colonies and building new toys are nice. Winning the game, however, remains the goal. To that end, players will have to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune in the guise of "random" events. Note that the word random is in quotation marks in the preceding sentence. Events are far from random.

While the location of mineral deposits varies from game to game, players can be certain that the Martian commander will always send a nasty note as soon as their first probe is launched, that their first Mark III generator will melt down, that they will "stumble" across the two highest technology ships, as well as the Martian flu, and that the Martians will deliver one lalapalooza farewell punch at the end of the game. Colonies are certain to declare their independence, too, but this usually occurs after their usefulness becomes moot. In other words, that old "adventure game" story line element is the thread that holds *Millennium* together. It is unfortunate that only these few, fixed "random" events were included in the game, for variety is the spice of game replayability, and *Millennium* would certainly have more of that if there were more randomness built into it. Like any other adventure game, after a few plays, one has "done it all" and the game is likely to go on the shelf for a long, long time.

The Speed of Lights

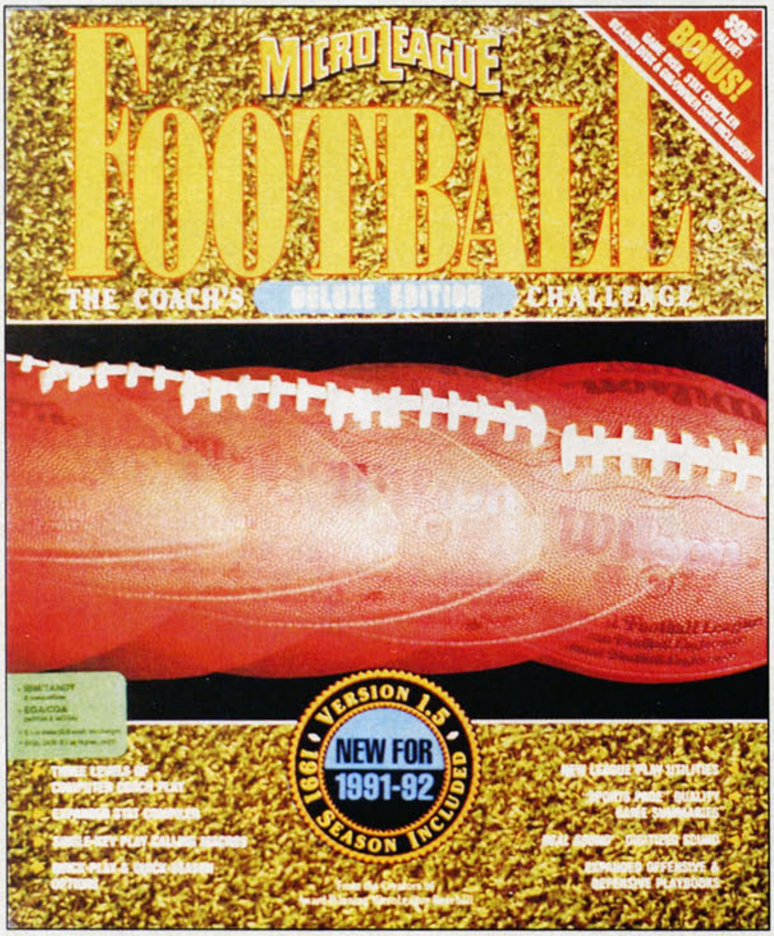
With *Millennium*, **Paragon** has taken their first step into strategy gaming. Supported by an arcade game crutch in combat and welded together by an adventure game's linear story line which might have been better left in their *MegaTraveller* products, the game still provided several enjoyable playings for this reviewer. While it is not outside the bounds of reason to draw parallels between *Millennium* and *Civilization*, *Millennium* would be to *Civilization* what a train would be to a car. *Millennium* will get you there, but it locks the player onto a set of tracks rather than allowing him or her to veer off and really go exploring. *Millennium* holds up very well as a game, however, showing considerable promise as the first of (hopefully) many strategy games from Paragon. If there is a cadre of "pure" strategy game designers to be found along the hallways of Paragon Software, this reviewer hopes that they can launch another project soon. A pure strategy/war game without the arcade/adventure game elements seems a challenge Paragon is ready and able to meet.

While the speed at which *Millennium* flows is excellent, limited only by one's ability to click off another hour or day and deal with events as they occur (rather than *waiting* forever for anything significant to happen), players who are not "born administrators" might find all of the rote interplanetary commerce management to become mere "busywork." Of course, some people also find golf to be a boring sport, because the same thing must be done by an individual over and over again. Still, like golf, this reviewer went back for several "rounds" of play in an effort to improve his score (read: efficiency). Call me a cad(dy), but when Alan Shepard hit the first golf ball on the moon, he was prescient in *fore*casting the game of *Millennium*. Fore! **CGW**

No-Nonsense Gridiron Performer

MicroLeague Sports' MicroLeague Football: The Coach's Challenge

by Win Rogers



TITLE:	MicroLeague Football: The Coach's Challenge (1.5)
SYSTEM:	IBM
# OF PLAYERS:	1-2
PRICE:	$69.95 for Deluxe Edition with General Manager/Owner's Disk
PROTECTION:	Document Look-Up
PUBLISHER:	MicroLeague Sports, Inc. Newark, DE

Even successful sports franchises must occasionally undergo a "rebuilding process." Normally, such a process means that the franchise will undergo a painful couple of years as a *loser* before becoming a *winner* once again. **MicroLeague Sports** has managed to "rebuild" *MicroLeague Football* without forcing gamers to go through the painful "loser" stage. The company has upgraded *MicroLeague Football* to *MicroLeague Football: The Coach's Challenge* (Version 1.5) and, in doing so, has come up with a lively, well-designed strategy game. There is no arcade mode and the graphics are not fancy, but the game provides a thorough, accessible simulation of football strategy. Like their *MicroLeague Baseball: The Manager's Challenge* (reviewed in *CGW* #88), this game has a companion volume, *The MicroLeague Football Power Bundle* (from **Bantam Books**), which offers a demo version of the game and background information about football strategy and the particular strengths and weaknesses of the classic teams included with the game.

The manufacturer reports that *MicroLeague Football: The Coach's Challenge* (*MLFTCC*) will only be stocked in software stores as a "Deluxe Edition." The General Manager's/Owner's Disk, needed for making roster changes, used to be sold separately, but is now packed as part of the Deluxe Edition. The basic game, without the utility disk, will be seen only at discount outlets like K-Mart or Target.

MLFTCC comes with a total of 48 rosters — all the 1990 teams plus a selection of twenty historic rosters from the 1958 Baltimore Colts through the 1986 New York Giants, Cleveland Browns and Denver Broncos. When the game is first booted up, these rosters can be used only for exhibition games. The manual takes one through an elaborate process of initializing a league, necessary for those who want to program and play out a season schedule or keep standings and statistics.

The Coin Toss

To get a taste of the game quickly it is best to ignore the first third of the manual, bypassing the initialize-a-league process, and go right to an exhibition game. Two players can play against each other, one player can take on the computer or one can watch computer-coached contests. Whenever the computer is a coach, the human player has the choice of making the computer-coach a tough coach, an average coach or an easy coach. This makes it easier for the novice to face doing battle with the likes of Johnny Unitas, Joe Namath or Mean Joe Greene. Another nice feature is the human player's ability to interrupt the game at any point in order to view game statistics or make substitutions. This makes it easy to keep up with the ebb and flow of the game without being overwhelmed.

The game is well designed to respond to the needs of players with different levels of knowledge and experience in coaching football. Coaching plays can be done in three ways. Though the process is somewhat confusing at first, novices will appreciate the chance to design plays by going through a series of graphic diagrams. The first choice is between moving the ball, trying for a field goal, punting and killing the clock. After choosing, for ex-



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ing, for example, to move the ball, the player chooses the formation, then the pass/run pattern and finally the primary receiver or back. Defensive play-calling follows a similar pattern.

To aid players in moving up the learning curve without too much frustration, there are some welcome "idiot keys." When it gets too frustrating to chart out the plays, one can always press "6" to have the computer select any running play, "7" for any passing play, or "5," if one is completely befuddled, for any play at all. The same choices are available for setting the defense. Be warned, though, that even an "easy" computer coach with a weak team like the 1990 Patriots can destroy the player who falls back on this kind of random play-calling, even when commanding Bart Starr and his 1966 Green Bay Packer teammates.

The second way to enter plays is through accessing a playbook, either a default playbook or one the player has designed and developed. One prints out the playbook for reference and enters the corresponding number for each desired play. The third method is called "expert play." One does not see diagrams or playbooks, but simply enters a four-digit code for each offensive or defensive play according to a key provided on cardboard reference cards packed with the game. Although this is *called* "expert mode," it may be easier for some people than the graphics mode with its four layers of diagrams to work through.

When the play has been called there is a graphic recreation of the play in CGA or EGA mode. There is no choice of uniform colors and the teams do not change ends, but the action is lively and easy to follow. The ball carrier turns white so he can be picked out and followed. The same digitized sound bites are heard again and again, however, and get so stale that most players will probably want to run the game without sound.



Replaying 1990

A replay of the 1990 NFC season was carried out to test the effectiveness of the simulation. Even though all 1990 teams were included and there is a module for preprogramming a season, it was a trickier than expected task. It would have been even worse if a replay of the entire NFL season, not just of the NFC, had been attempted. The scheduling module allows for a 16-week season, but in real life each team plays those games over seventeen weeks. The byes are staggered, so an encounter that is one team's eighth game may be its opponent's ninth. The scheduling module did not include the seventeenth week.

After some juggling, the schedule was set and the season was played out in a couple of minutes. While playing out a season it is possible to select any of the games to play out or watch in detail. Two of the three divisional leaders and four of the five playoff teams in the simulated season were the same as in the actual 1990 season, though the Philadelphia Eagles beat out the New York Giants for the Eastern Division title and the Minnesota Vikings replaced the Washington Redskins in a wildcard slot. Individual and team performances did not match up very well; in the simulated season running yards and pass completions were more evenly spread among all the available personnel on the roster than in the actual 1990 team records. It was a big disappointment not to be able to access any league leader lists for either individual or team performances. The data are stored team by team, but also ought to be available in summary for the entire conference. After all, storing, sorting and reporting data conveniently is what computers are good at.

Handicapping the Competition

MLFTCC will inevitably be compared with *NFL Pro League Football* from the phonetically similar-named **Micro-Sports** company (reviewed in *CGW* #90). Both games emphasize strategy and statistics, not arcade action. *NFL Pro League Football* costs more, but provides many more rosters with actual NFL stats — five years' worth. It keeps much more detailed game records of computer-versus-computer replays, and does a much better job in reporting league leaders. It offers a greater range of play-calling options and an innovative artificial intelligence "game plan" module for recording coaching tendencies to guide computer replays.

On the other hand, *MLFTCC* has more enjoyable, realistic graphics and is more accessible to the football strategy novice. It includes many features not included in *NFL Pro League Football*, such as the capability to add or trade players between different rosters and the ability to set up and play out a preprogrammed schedule. It offers more control over some game details such as substitutions and injuries. It may be all the football simulation many fans want.

Like MicroLeague's baseball game, *MLFTCC* has somewhat cumbersome procedures and documentation that is occasionally weak on grammar and accuracy. The reference cards do not simply reinforce the manual, as they should, but add information that is not in the manual and even correct mistakes in the manual. The front of the box says "1991 season included" when it is the 1990 season statistics that are provided. The manual contradicts itself on whether one can make substitutions when playing against the computer; fortunately one can.

Though the procedures outlined in the manual are sometimes cumbersome, the manual admits as much and scores points with this reviewer for one of the most honest (though ungrammatical) disclaimers ever included in software documentation. This occurs at the point when the General Manager/Owner's manual is describing how to edit player statistics: "Pay close attention to where you are and what you are doing, otherwise you will creating [sic] more stress than you would ever want to encounter from a game."

The **MicroLeague Sports** company is developing a broad range of sports simulations, with hockey, basketball, boxing and horse-racing simulations planned in addition to their successful baseball and football games. *MicroLeague Football: The Coach's Challenge* shares the general approach and the look of its interface screens with *MicroLeague Baseball: The Manager's Challenge*. It occupies the same niche among football simulations that its companion does among baseball simulations. Each has a strong emphasis on strategy, no arcade mode, serviceable but not spectacular EGA graphics, a helpful companion volume, somewhat cumbersome interfaces and quirky documentation, and useful but not state-of-the-art statistical modeling and reporting capabilities. Despite the relatively high sticker prices, these are actually economy cars offering dependable family transportation. They are for the serious no-nonsense sports fan — not for the thrill-seeker in the market for a sexy sports model. **cgw**

The Game as Social Experience

Prodigy's Next President *Offers the "Vision Thing"*

by Wyatt Lee

On Wednesday, February 5th, subscribers to **Prodigy** were introduced to a new concept in gaming. Rather than relying on the roll of the dice, a table of random events or the turn of a card, **Prodigy**'s *Next President* will use the accumulated results of polls (in which the players themselves participate and provide the basic demographics for the game) to create the results. The game's play will be advanced by daily news reports which will both set the stage by presenting a predetermined story line of events and indicate how the game is progressing by reporting on the results of the player-determined polls. Using these "news" reports and poll results, players will move to the campaign headquarters of the candidate of their choice and offer advice concerning campaign strategy.

Next President is a presidential election simulation in which four composite Democratic candidates square off against each other and their four Republican opponents while four composite Republican candidates face each other and their Democratic competition. By paying detailed attention to real issues (abortion, funding drug treatment, environmental spending, isolationism, national health insurance, protectionism, affirmative action and reduction of Social Security taxes), the game reminds us of a very serious game from *Campaigns and Elections* magazine that *CGW* reviewed in 1988 (#51). Until *Next President*, the political journal's *On the Campaign Trail* was the only other campaign game that we recall that paid any real attention to issues. *President Elect '88* and its ancestor focused more on campaign spending than issues (except in the debates) and the *Monopoly*-style *Campaign Promises* focused on regions.

Ironically, *On the Campaign Trail* taught a political theory of ambiguity, noting that real politicians always lose some votes somewhere *every* time they take a stand. In *Next President*, the issues are the "meat and potatoes" of the game. Gamers influence the game's database by taking stands on the issues and they influence their chosen candidate's chances by encouraging him or her to take a given stand on various issues.



The Four Flushers (Meet the Candidates)

The candidates, drawn from profiles to be found in both major parties, are an interesting mix. The Democrats include: a 59-year-old divorced male governor from a southern state who is anti-defense spending and pro-affirmative action, but against abortion and soft on the environment; a 66-year-old married male governor from a northeastern state who is protectionist in economics, but opposed to affirmative action; a 53-year-old married female senator from a midwestern state who is strongly pro-choice and strongly protectionist, as well as favoring the traditional liberal agenda on the environment and affirmative action; and a 49-year-old twice-married male congressman from a western state who is strongly in favor of national health insurance with primarily liberal views on the rest of the issues.



The Republican candidates include: a 43-year-old married male senator from a New England state who is strongly anti-abortion and strongly anti-protectionist; a 61-year-old married male who is both a retired general/war hero and strongly opposed to a social agenda based on peace dividends; a 58-year-old twice-married male congressman from a western state who is an interesting blend featuring a *very* protectionist and very pro-environment agenda; and a 54-year-old married female professor at a major midwestern university who is strongly pro-choice and strongly pro-national health insurance on the one side, while being anti-affirmative action and anti-Social Security on the other.

Once players have emulated Simon & Garfunkel's legendary Mrs. Robinson by "lookin' through the candidates to date," it is time for the next, and potentially most fascinating, phase of the game. At the Campaign Headquarters, players try to influence their chosen candidate to either change positions or stay the course, as their fellow campaign workers attempt to do the same from their viewpoints. Beyond the advice of the players, fast-breaking news stories and the preference polls for upcoming primaries will influence each candidate's potential positions. These changing perspectives and situations will present some of the decision points that each player will face in the course of the game by, possibly, causing players to compromise on some issues and become more firm on others.

Next President is a fascinating experiment in which thousands of gamers will make thousands of decisions that will decide the basis and results of the game. Right now, the results of the experiment are still out, but we think everyone on the **Prodigy** network has gotta get this vision thing.

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COMPUTER WARGAMING WORLD

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Computer Wargaming World is published twelve times a year as a free supplement in ***Computer Gaming World***.

II Samuel 22:35

Broadsides & Gripeshot

Reach Out and Crush Someone

by Alan Emrich

Last issue, we revealed to our readers a possible new trend in computer wargaming: "games sans brains." These are complete wargames *without* artificial opponents to play against. Instead, computer wargamers would either have to play both sides solitaire (as so many boardgamers do) or connect up by modem, E-mail or face-to-face to play out their campaigns. Because of the normal production lag time between issues, readers' feedback comments on this subject will be printed *next* issue in this column. At the time of this writing, the feedback cards for issue #92 haven't begun to trickle in yet, but they soon will.

Wargamers of the World, Unite!

Readers of *Computer Wargaming World* will learn that this *CWW* editor is a great believer in "wargamer connectivity." Wargamers need to search out and engage each other, so as to enjoy our hobby. It is well known that wargamers are a niche market. (Fortunately for wargaming, we are a niche market with disproportionately high economic clout, which keeps us from being *completely* ignored.)

Because wargamers are few, where role-players (for example) are many, it is often harder to find a real *live* opponent to play wargames with. To that end, this editor wishes to express his willingness to go the extra mile to help facilitate wargaming connectivity. Of course, there are game clubs, gaming conventions (where mostly boardgames are played), play-by-mail, play-by-email, modem, serial and network gaming, all of which are designed to help wargamers find each other. For over 25 years now, *The Avalon Hill General* has run their "Opponents Wanted" ads, a feature which has been emulated on the computer networks and in many other magazines, including *Computer Wargaming World*.

That's the particular point, here. While it is one thing to say that the editorial staff here are partisans of wargamer connectivity, it is another thing to *do* something about it. Therefore, this opportunity is being taken to ask all our *CWW* readers to do *their* bit, and make a few wargaming buddies along the way.

Be sure to look at our *Opponents Wanted* feature on page 92 of this issue. There you'll find listings for networks, BBSs and individuals seeking opponents like you. Do yourself a favor. If an ad looks interesting, make a call. Better still, do a good turn for the wargaming hobby and place your own ad in our *Opponents Wanted* section. The price is right (free). This editor has learned that a well-connected wargamer is a happy wargamer. Let's strengthen the foundations of the wargaming community, starting with something as small and enjoyable as placing an *Opponents Wanted* ad.

A Challenge from the CWW Staff

[With apologies to the introduction to *Patton*.]

At ease. When you were younger and just learning wargames, you all admired the best game designers, the cleverest strategist, the best die roller.... Wargamers love a winner, and will not tolerate a loser! When you stick your hand over a bunch of units that used to be your front line — well... you'll know what to do.

The apathetic are the enemy! Wade into them. Spill their counters. Shoot them by e-mail. I want you to contact them, and use their connected computers to grease the treads of your tanks! I want you to hold them by phone, and kick them in the bits! I want you to kick the code out them all the time because we are not interested in playing solitaire only, we're here to make the world is safe for wargamers once again!

With the 50th anniversary of World War II still in full swing, we can thank our parents or grandparents for not only making the world safe for democracy, but also for giving us so many good wargames to play. (Those who think that such a statement is "sick" must consider the fact that, although WWII produced many hit songs, it was not, primarily, a musical.) Reader response to *Computer Wargaming World* and its magazine-within-the-magazine look and feel has been highly favorable. Computer wargamers are finding their media niche here among these pages, even as computer wargame coverage in traditional board wargame magazines continues to rate poorly among their predominantly reactionary readers.

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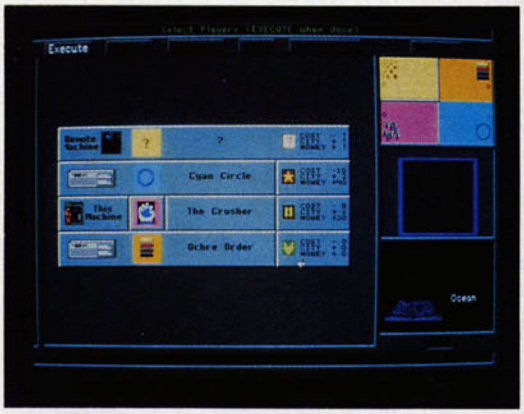
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New Worlds to Conquer

Playtester's Notes on Global Conquest

by Alan Emrich

TITLE:	Global Conquest
SYSTEM:	IBM
PRICE:	$69.95
DESIGNER:	Dan Bunten
PUBLISHER:	MicroPlay Hunt Valley, MD









[Editor's Note: Although Global Conquest *was not formally released at the time this article was written, the version examined included all of the game's features and was going through quality assurance for a final check for bugs. Consequently, the copy protection method had not yet been included in the game and, thus, could not be listed.]*

Designing computer games has always been a pyramid-shaped operation, working from top to bottom. At the top is the designer, at the base are the gamers, and in between are the developers, playtesters, quality assurance people, marketers and other types who get involved in the game manufacturing process. It is newsworthy to report that veteran strategy game designer Dan Bunten (*Command HQ*, *Modem Wars*, *M.U.L.E.* and *Seven Cities of Gold*) has turned the "design pyramid" upside down with his latest effort, entitled *Global Conquest* (soon to be released on the **Microplay** label from **Microprose**).

Vox Populi

After the release of *Command HQ*, a little over a year ago, a growing corps of dedicated players (including this reviewer) posted scores of comments on the various computer networks and BBSs around the country. The contents of these messages were read by Dan and company at **Ozark Softscape** (who regularly monitor the networks), with the gist being that some fine-tuning could still be done on their then-recently released *Command HQ* project, particularly to improve the play of the computer opponent. Once the phone number got posted, messages began to pour into the Ozark Softscape BBS in Arkansas and this core of *CHQ* players became the ad hoc playtest group for what became the latest (1.97) version of that game. (Kudos, by the way, are due Ozark for enhancing *CHQ* on their own time between projects.)

Even after the release of this version of *Command HQ*, however, the Ozark Softscape BBS was still abuzz with comments, questions and suggestions (*especially* suggestions, Dan would say). Apparently, Dan had always wanted "to do *Empire* right," in his own words and, when he mentioned this on his BBS, *CHQ*ers began chiming in about what they'd like to see in such a project. Armed with extremely well-connected *CHQ* fanatics (to whom, apparently, phone bills are no object), and led by "Modem Master" Dan Bunten and the team at Ozark Softscape, Dan's latest gaming project was conceived.

The Pentagon Has Five Sides, Too

Global Conquest is an abstract strategic level strategy/wargame in the best traditions of *Empire*, *Strategic Conquest* and *Sid Meier's Civilization*. Clearly, however, the game's roots are deeply embedded in *Command HQ*, where quick-draw modem play makes up the very heart that pumps the game-play action.

Global Conquest is a five-sided conflict, with four "alien invaders" (players) simultaneously invading a planet and trying to best both the natives and each other. Each game is played on a randomly generated world that is hidden until discovered. Terrain types are not as numerous as in *Command HQ*, but still include forests, mountains, oil (found only by searching swamps) plus a new resource, minerals (found only by searching mountains). These terrain types go along with the usual plain, oceans, docks and cities (which now come in a variety of "economic sizes" ranging from village to metropolis — called a "metroplex" — plus the natives' capital city). Thus equipped, the map is poised for a set-piece wargame to ensue.

War and Pieces

Naturally, a "set-piece" wargame requires a good set of pieces. *Global Conquest* has a mix of unit types that will appear very familiar to *Command HQ* players. Infantry, armor, airplanes, submarines, carriers and battleships (replacing *CHQ*'s cruisers) form the core unit types. To this is added the Command Center ("Comcen") and spy pieces straight out of *Modem Wars*. The Comcen is a player's best all-round piece for both scouting terrain and fighting. Like the king in chess, however, losing it means losing the war (a defeated player can, however, opt to take over a computer player's position to finish the game). Spies are used to gather military information, sabotage enemy production and flush out other spies.

The interface for movement is also reminiscent of *Command HQ*, with simple "grab and go" commands easily executed with a couple of mouse clicks. It has evolved, though, in that sub-menus are presented when commanding a unit by simply doing a "held click" (holding the button for a full second) when selecting it. These sub-menus will allow land and sea units to blitz (move faster, but suffer attrition as they go), sneak (move slower, but remain unspotted until they are right on top of an enemy), pursue (a designated enemy unit), repeat (the same move as the last unit given orders — that is very handy for issuing complex orders to large masses of pieces quickly), etc. Airplane sub-menus allow for kamikaze at-

tacks, dogfights, transport missions, paradrops and so forth.

The combat mechanics are virtually identical to those in *Command HQ*. Units will attack automatically when within proximity of each other. Flank and rear attacks inflict extra damage in land battles, while air combat is also handled largely as it was in *CHQ*, with a few refinements thrown in. Submarines are still stealthy, but without "known" sea lanes to patrol, submarines have a somewhat reduced military value compared to those in *CHQ*. To offset this, they now cost $10 billion less than battleships (and $20 billion less than carriers) do, making enemy denial of the oceans an interesting speculative venture now.

A major departure that will be noticed by veteran *CHQ* players is that there are no longer any "sea lanes" by which units at sea will neatly move around the edges of continents. Instead, units may now have up to four destination points set at once, allowing them to maneuver around obstacles only upon one's own personal instructions. This can allow skillful players to perform some very complex maneuvers and should be a welcome new feature of *Global Conquest* among veteran *CHQ* players once their skill at using it is mastered.

Twists in Turns

While *Command HQ* is played in real time (with units moving, fighting and being able to receive orders continuously during play) and *Empire*, *Civilization*, etc. are turn-based (with one player completing a turn, including battles, followed by the next player's turn, etc.), *Global Conquest* walks a new middle ground. Using what Dan describes as a "modified real time" game turn sequence, each "turn" consists of two phases.

During the first (or "planning") phase, all units sit still and receive their orders, the exception being airplanes, which carry out their orders the instant they are issued. At some point, one of the human players will hit the "execute" button that will give his opponent twenty seconds to finish his or her turn before the second (or "execution") phase begins. In other words, there is always an element of time pressure during the planning phases, in which players are intensely plotting the demise of or diplomacy with the other players in the game.

The execution phase is eight "pulses" of game play; in other words, eight opportunities for every unit to move and shoot at others, exactly as a turn works in *Command HQ*. However, during this phase, players can only watch events unfold, for units cannot be interacted with again until the eight pulses are complete and another planning phase for the next turn commences. More than once a player has bravely marched his Comcen to eliminate a single reduced unit in a city, only to find a surprise reinforcement appear and have the two units combine to eliminate his Comcen! At times like that, eight pulses of game play can be excruciating to watch go by.

Burbs! (Oh, excuse me...)

Fortunately for *Command HQ* veterans, the game control buttons (and their corresponding function keys) translate directly over to *Global Conquest*. F4 still calls up the airplanes, F5 still allows for "chat" messages but the oft-hit



F6 key leads to a different kind of building menu. In fact, *Global Conquest* has got an economic system souped up quite a bit from *CHQ*, although not nearly as intricate as in *Civilization*.

During a planning phase, a player can do a long click over a vacant square of a city and call up its production menu. At the top is the city name followed by a brief ledger including: the city's present cash balance; its income (villages, towns, cities and metroplexes produce $4, $6, $8 and $10 "bucks" per turn, respectively) that includes any nearby friendly resources (which generate an additional $2 bucks per turn each); the cost it pays to support the units built by and attached to it (a la *Civilization*), etc. beneath this are the choices of units to produce that range in cost from $25 bucks for infantry and subs, $35 bucks for tanks, battleships and airplanes all the way up to $85 bucks for a new spy. Players also have the option of not producing *any* unit at a given city, allowing it to save its money locally.

Beyond managing individual cities, however, by hitting the "Burb" (F6) button, a window pops up showing a list of all of a player's cities, complete with economic and production information. Above this is the player's "treasury" (i.e., the "safe" money that is not at risk when cities are captured), while beneath it are three buttons: build, transfer and support. By activating one of these buttons and clicking on a city name, that activity can take place. For instance, selecting build, followed by a city name on the list, one is instantly zapped over to the city's build menu and, when finished there, zapped back to the burb menu. Similarly, transfer allows for moving money from individual cities to one's treasury, and back again to the cities (although only half of a transfer *from* the treasury gets to any specific city — corruption, no doubt). The support button allows a player to reassign units instantly to different cities. The economic system is far deeper than that of *Command HQ* and *Empire*, but has been honed through many man-hours of playtest experience into a system that is as visually intuitive and quick to use as possible (which is vital in a modem play game).

The Windows of Opportunity

The three windows along the right side of the screen display replace the windows along the bottom of the *Command HQ* screen display. The top window shows the four players, their scores, known assets and alliances. Above this window is a button marked Treaties. It is here that players can cut deals in earnest. Up to three levels of entanglement can be consummated with each other player. The first level is a simple "cease fire," in which units no longer shoot at each other. From here the stakes can be raised to "alliance," in which players share their personal information with each other (where all their units are, what parts of the map they've discovered and their complete economic picture) and mutually receive a 25% income bonus. Finally, players can go to the highest level of "teammates," in which the characteristics of the other two levels are largely in effect, *plus* players can control each other's units and production!

By referencing this window, players will get an instant picture of who is winning (and, consequently, needs to be ganged up on), who's allied with whom, etc. Interestingly, computer players have a curious way of making and breaking alliances that, while based on some logic routines, have so many variables in them that they can act annoyingly human in their diplomatic fickleness. Well, like most good global conquest games (particularly *Global Conquest*), the only good opponent is a dead one.

The middle window is for "current events." Players will see where units have been built or destroyed and can zoom in instantly to those areas by clicking on this window.

The bottom window provides close up information on the space the cursor is currently over. *Command HQ* players will be very familiar with the uses of this window, but many new features have been added to it. Unit strengths are now shown in percentages, for example. Thus, players will get a solid *numerical* value for each unit's strength (including enemy units). In battles, each unit shows a miniature icon of the unit it is engaged with on the side that it is engaged from, making flank and rear attacks easier to determine. Putting the cursor over cities will also show what unit is under construction there, as well as how many turns away it is from completion. With that and the spiffy hi-res EGA graphics in this window, players will be enjoying one *very* sharp-looking and informative display.

That Personal Touch

As a "throwaway" feature of the game, it also includes an "icon editor" program. This allows players to paint their own custom icons as symbols of their empire. Frankly, the playtesters went a bit nuts with this, and currently this reviewer has over 60 icons on file! It is easy to see the network and BBS libraries brimming with players' original creations shortly after the game is released. Frankly, this element of letting players add their own "personal touches" is what keeps *Dungeons & Dragons* alive, and can only help lengthen the legs of *Global Conquest*. This reviewer predicts that this little "throwaway" feature not originally intended in the design is going to be a runaway hit element to the game's future.

Custom Scenarios Made Easy

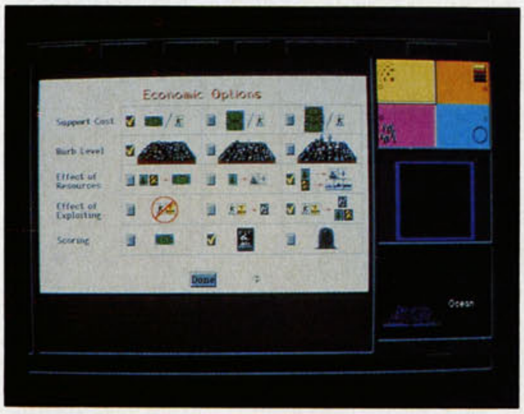
So how did Dan Bunten turn the design pyramid upside down? While everything previously mentioned about *Global Conquest* might sound straightforward, it is only because this reviewer took a single path in explaining

the game. Players, however, will get to choose their own paths. Perhaps some further explanation is in order....

During the design process, Dan received plenty of input from his legion of dedicated *CHQ* players. Of course, every one of them had his own individual ideas of what would make a good strategy game. This left Dan with many choices to make, but rather than choosing, he's left all that up to the players. In other words, players can select from many features and "custom design" their own favorite games. Frankly, this element of player customization is going to be *Global Conquest*'s great strength among strategy gamers.

Some examples of scenario customization are in order, of course. Not only can players paint their own imperial designation (player icon), as described above, they can also type in their own name for it (again, a la *Civilization*) and set a "rank" (or difficulty level) for each (affecting the amount of starting cities and money, as well as the purchase price of units throughout the game). One can also choose the "look" of the pieces on the game map from among three different sets (the standard military symbols, standard icons or exotic icons).

When designing a scenario to play, first there are the set up options. The mix of units in the game includes infantry only, WWI level (which adds battleships and submarines), WWII level (which adds tanks, planes and carriers) and then the Comcen and spy pieces



can be added separately to the mix. This reviewer's faithful 6-year-old son, junior general and (now) rookie playtester, James, managed a WWI level game with very little help from daddy. The best part was that this reviewer realized *Global Conquest* was no less interesting even when using a more limited mix of units in the game.

From here, a scenario has a plethora of economic options. The general richness of the world and the amount of "bucks" it will take to support units each turn are easily adjustable. Resources can also be set to have a restricting effect (players cannot build tanks and planes unless an oil resource is nearby, and are similarly restricted from building ships unless there are nearby minerals). Economic exploitation (by expending an infantry unit) can be set to either create a resource on any land hex (although these deplete during the game) or attempt to upgrade "burbs" (from villages to towns and towns to cities).

Most importantly, one of three victory criteria can be set. Play can either be for the largest economy (with money in the bank counting the most), inflicting the most damage on enemies or, the most cutthroat of all, to control the lone alien capital. This latter victory criterion removes some subtlety in play but, oh, what catfights it produces!

Play options include setting the end-of-turn time limit from 5 seconds after the first player hits the execute button, to 20 or a more gentlemanly 60 seconds. Alternately, a flat two or four minutes can be set, or turns can be for an unlimited time. Game turns can be set to 30, 60, 90, 120 or unlimited in length. Opponent visibility can be hidden (everything is secret until discovered), partially hidden (players will jointly see whatever any player can see) or open (which is like a boardgame, with the map and visible units always on display).

Finally, the map can be customized. Everything from the size of the playing surface to the density of each terrain type, resources, cities and number of native units can all be adjusted or left to be "rolled up randomly" by the computer. When each game starts, there is a "creation" process with pictures of a world

being created scrolling along the right side of the screen (sound familiar, *Civilization* fans?).

Take a Walk on the "Wild" Side

When Dan originally described his plans to his playtest legions (whom he keeps from pirating by giving out unique NAME.PIC files that can instantly be traced and without which the playtest versions of his games cannot be played) he said, "Think of it as *Command HQ* meets *Seven Cities* meets *M.U.L.E.*" Well, the single most important element of *M.U.L.E.* is, arguably, the random events which occur every five turns, and these events can also be found in *Global Conquest* as a major feature of the game. These can be toggled off or a deck of "tame" cards (left over from *Robot Rascals*?) can be used in play. Optionally, players can add the "wild" cards to the deck as well.

"Tame" events include such things as the weather, local economy, native attitudes (or the ever-merciful "no effect"). "Wild" events, on the other hand, might beset players with time warps (literally resetting the game five turns — very cool — and give players the chance to answer the question: What *would* you do differently, knowing what you've learned in the past five turns?) and space pirates (who steal every saved buck on the planet). These event cards remind one of playing the popular **Mayfair** boardgame *Cosmic Encounter* for, while their consequences are profound, each of the 32 events will only be decisive if a player has not maintained enough flexibility to adapt his or her plans to the ever-changing circumstances they present.

Quite honestly, this reviewer and most of the rest of the playtest group considered these "wild" events a serious breach of "wargaming etiquette." Dan, however, persisted with his "Try them, you'll like them" sales pitch to these grognards who, eventually, did. Actually, Dan was right on target by adding these wild events to the game, for not only do they enhance play value of the product, but they reinforce the occasionally bizarre science-fictionesque theme of the game.

To Battle!

Global Conquest tries to deliver the proverbial kitchen sink in strategy gaming. As part of the playtest group, it is difficult for this reviewer to find much to complain about in the game, because virtually every complaint or comment about the game over the past few months has been met with a change to either add, fix or improve it by Dan and the gang at Ozark Softscape! Of course, this reviewer would like to have seen an amalgamated victory criteria, which incorporated all three elements of economic power, enemy casualty infliction and control of the alien capital, but "you can't have everything."

One thing players *can* have with *Global Conquest* is what is probably the largest rules manual in any **Microprose** released game to date. Written in a humorous, science-fiction motif, but complete with the types of tabular information serious strategy gamers desire, its sheer size will require a certain amount of "manual" dexterity to manage.

While up to four human players can play at the same machine by "hot-seating it" back and forth in front of the monitor (the screen blacks out between player turns so no one can see what the last guy was up to), a network driver of sorts is scheduled for inclusion in the game. It will allow players to set up their own mini-networks by having one computer as a master to three connected "slaves." No Novell or other network drivers will be included in the finished package, although "hooks" have been left in the game for their later inclusion, should anyone care to program them (contact Ozark Softscape for details). Furthermore, a hook has also been included for a map editor (again, should anyone care to program it). For the time being, players can save the maps from past games and select them again for later use.

Whew! As if the four billion permutations of the game weren't enough, *Global Conquest* also offers a wide variety of features to explore. This is a strategy game that one can truly "grow into," customizing it to suit and playing others by modem or network for lively interactive play. If anything major is missing, then blame the bottom of the design pyramid this time, for Dan Bunten, literally, "made this game for you." **CGW**

Ancient China Syndrome

Koei's Romance of the Three Kingdoms II

by Roger White

TITLE:	Romance of the Three Kingdoms II
SYSTEM:	IBM
# PLAYERS:	1-12
PRICE:	$69.95
PROTECTION:	None
DESIGNER:	Kou Shibusawa
PUBLISHER:	Koei Burlingame, CA

Koei is the leader in games about historical China. In *Romance of the Three Kingdoms II* (*RTK2*), they have updated their previous offering, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, in the hardware supported and in the commands available to the player. The result is a game brought up to date on technology and one that does a better job of simulating the chaos of that era.



Background

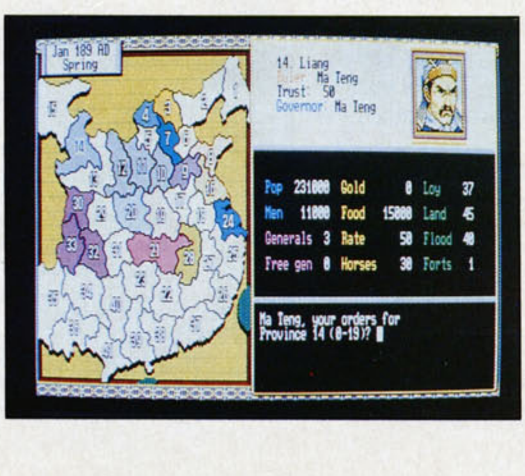
Romance of the Three Kingdoms is the title of a Chinese novel written about chaotic times in second century China, when the Han dynasty collapsed and was replaced briefly by three rival kingdoms — Wei, Wu and Shu. The three kingdoms lasted about half a century until they were unified under the first Emperor of the Chin dynasty. (This was the period when Sun Tzu wrote *The Art of War* and he is here under the name Sun Ce.) The novel describes a time of warlords, conflicting loyalties and treachery (on a scale unrivaled in Western literature) and the game reflects this.

Positions, Everyone...

Each player takes the position of a warlord aspiring to be Emperor by conquering all the provinces of ancient China. The warlord must choose how to allocate resources between:

- making his peasants happy and productive
- recruiting, training and arming his military
- buying the loyalty of his generals
- buying loyalty from other warlords' generals
- keeping other warlords pacified.

The player's warlord is one of a group of four to 15 other warlords — depending on the scenario — trying to accomplish the same goal. (This was a chaotic time by any measure.) Up to 12 of these can be other human players, but the game organization is awkward for multi-player use, because each province's turn comes up randomly during each month and, hence, players will be hopping in and out of the command seat many times a turn.



Snafus Straightened

RTK2 has straightened out some of the procedural peculiarities that marred *RTK*. For instance, each general takes an action in *RTK2* rather than being restricted to just one action per province no matter how many generals are stationed in it. *RTK2* sports nice EGA graphics and **AdLib** sound, but it may make trivia history as the last commercial entertainment offering *not* to support a mouse.

Koei has moved more of the behind-the-scenes action up front. The main screen shows little horses galloping between provinces, so the player can get a feel for which provinces contain leaders and which leaders are conversing. If these messengers go through the player's provinces, they sometimes get caught and the player can read the messages.

Diplomacy Enhanced

Diplomacy is not a sideline in *RTK2* — the player can't do all his or her negotiating with sword and pike and still be using resources efficiently. Computer leaders will gang up to launch joint invasions. To counter this, the game incorporates ways for the player to call in defensive reinforcements from silicon allies. The game also provides ways for the player to launch joint invasions of enemy provinces.

The Field of Battle

When the player, or the player's enemies, determine that differences are irreconcilable, it's war time. War takes the player to a tactical view of the contested province and the time for maneuvering military units begins. Units maneuver in turn-by-turn fashion on terrain that is different for each province. Battles consist of engagements that progressively weaken the units involved rather than killing them instantly. There are "trick" attacks available, such as incendiary attacks, insult attacks and single combat. There is also treachery: if it moves, it can be bought.

In *RTK2*, battles can last longer than a month. Once the end of a month is reached on the tactical screen, the game reverts back to the main menu and regular play is resumed until that

province's "turn" comes up again in the next month of play. This allows time for both sides to order in reinforcements and line up new allies for the next month's continuation.

True to Form

The changes **Koei** has made in *RTK2* bring the game closer to the form of the novel. These warlords didn't operate in a black-and-white world; their fates rose and fell many times, and they had to deal with familial and political obligations as well as the military and economic ones. **Koei**'s enhancement of the diplomacy, the treachery and the joint military ventures brings out more of this chaotic flavor. **CGW**

Wise Counsel on *Romance of the Three Kingdoms 2*

The path to Zhuge Liang's door was not well beaten. The shingle over the door read Zhuge Liang, Advisor to Warlords, but it looked like it might have been centuries since anyone had last read it. A white-bearded man stood in the doorway motioning for me to come in.

"Business has been slow?" I queried.

"Terrible!" he said shaking his head, "You'd think in these times I'd have to beat off aspirants with a stick, but no. They think they know it all." He stuck out his tongue as he looked down the road. "Only that loser Lui Bei has bothered to show up, and I've chased him off twice." He looked back. "What can I do for you, sir?"

"I'm here for advice."

"Well, why didn't you say so! Come right in."

The Words of the Master

These are turbulent times, sir, and there are many things for people to be loyal to. The key to victory will be getting your share. You want the loyalty of three kinds of people: peasants, generals and warlords.

Peasants: When the peasants aren't revolting they are providing you with the food and gold that makes your armies run. Give them food and they will return you food and gold many times over. Let a general with high charm do your giving and a little food will go a long way.

Generals: Your generals are your hands, eyes and mouths. You need loyal generals, and lots of them, to wage peace or war. Pleasing peasants is simple. Pleasing generals takes a little research into their likes and dislikes. Give horses to generals with high war ratings, special visits to generals with high intelligence ratings and letters to those with high charm ratings. *Gold* will reach all of them.

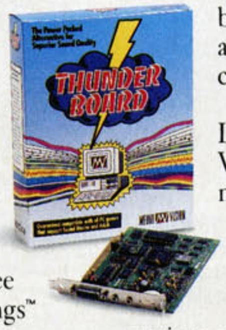
Other Warlords: Your neighbors are numerous, and as ambitious and bloodthirsty as you are, so there's going to be



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bloodshed. Fortunately for you, they have lots of neighbors too. The goal of your diplomatic efforts is to see to it that your neighbors find some other neighbor a more attractive target than you. You want peace with all your neighbors except one: the one you want to destroy. When that one neighbor is destroyed, then pick another single neighbor to take on. The more you can avoid wars on many fronts, the more effective your military will be.

Priority: Your leader's most time-consuming task throughout the game will be building the loyalty of your generals. Consider him a human-resource person first, then a diplomat and finally a warrior.

Building armies: Armies are your tool for taking provinces. Poor armies can take unoccupied provinces, but if you covet a province already occupied by a warlord you're going to need a quality army.

Concentration: Put all your eggs in one basket. Only one general can occupy a square and battle losses are determined in part by the disparity in size between the contestants. This makes a strong general with 10,000 men worth much more than five average generals with 2,000 men each. Build each general's army to 10,000 men before you start on the next.

Quality: Expend resources to improve the quality of your armies: spend the money to acquire arms and take the time to train them before you take them to battle.

Effective recruiting: To win battles you need generals, so you must collect generals even before you win battles. To do this, you entice them to come from other warlords or you search your home provinces to find likely candidates waiting to be discovered. Some provinces, such as 21, are rich with hidden candidates; others, such as 6, are rich with discontented generals. Play the game many times and keep a record of where your heroes are coming from.

Do your homework: In the turns before you start recruiting, view the various provinces and make records of the generals' loyalty and characteristics. That way you'll know where to find vulnerable generals and know what enticement to use. Do your searching and recruiting at the beginning of the turn and *don't* use your leader. That way when you find someone and entice him to join, your leader can reward the general in the same turn and bring his loyalty up to a safe value before the other warlords get a chance to steal him away — and they surely will if they get a chance.

Wealth: OWPs (Other Warlord's Provinces) are likely to be your richest resource. The Yin of the other Warlords is as strong as the Yang. They muster formidable armies, but they also improve provinces. A province owned by another warlord will be rich with gold and food, filled with happy peasants and guarded by able generals. You covet all these things. Once you start down conquest road, follow the route of the warlord's provinces.

Tactics: Assemble a core army: 40,000

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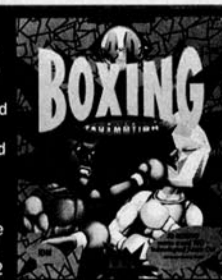
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men, well-armed, well-trained and well-led, should do. This means you will need at least five generals in the starting province and they all should be at 100% loyalty — you'll be acquiring plenty of untrustworthy generals as you campaign.

Once you have won, take a month or two to reorganize. Fill out the ranks of your loyal generals' armies and strip men from the untrustworthy ones. Pick which general will be governor when your leader moves on and boost his loyalty to 100%. If the merchant comes, buy more arms for your generals. If a general hasn't any better thing to do, train, train and train.

When you have 40,000 men ready to go again, continue the campaign against the warlord you have already attacked. A warlord's forces will always retreat into a province he already controls, if one is adjacent, and retreat into an unoccupied province, if a controlled one isn't available. The goal of your campaign is to corner him so that he can retreat into neither. Once you corner him and defeat him, you will have the opportunity to recruit all his remaining generals, and if that is his last province, he is gone from the game — unless you want to set him up as a "straw man" for some reason.

Targets: Pick on outlying provinces first. Once you start winning, you don't want to lose. The easiest way to get upset is for your opponent to call in reinforcements from his nearby allies, so pick isolated provinces to start your campaign.

Making friends on the way: The limiting factor in your expansion will be how quickly you can acquire generals. When you take lots of generals in a battle, first strip them of men so they are less attractive to the other leaders, then spread them out through the provinces behind you. Once spread out, the governors of the provinces can reward these men just as your leader does, and many generals can be given loyalty boosts in the same turn.

Once generals are loyal, you can re-man them, re-arm them and send them back to the front. Hold off on training until you can collect a lot of recruits in a single province. This is because one general can train many armies at the same time. Once you have a lot of recruits gathered together, you can have a "training party" in which each general in the province takes his turn training the troops, and all the troops benefit from many rounds of training.

Keep the loyalty of your generals high so your nearby neighbors won't be tempted to steal them and help those neighbors in campaigns when called upon to do so.

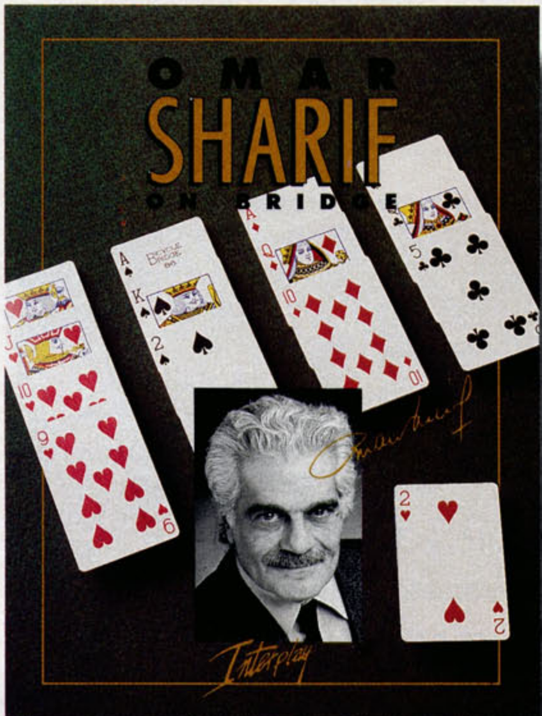
Parting Admonition

"Do these things well, sir," he said, "and the Three Kingdoms will become a figment in someone's imagination."

An apprentice came in. "Excuse me, Master — Lui Bei is here to see you again."

"For a third time... perhaps this general does have some redeeming qualities. Excuse me, sir, history calls."
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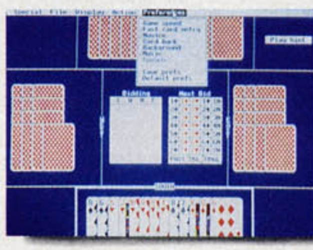
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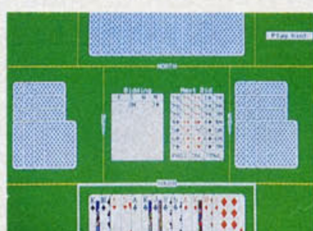
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by Roger-Tzu

The year: 4000BC.

The place: a grassy, well-watered plain covered with wagons, oxen and people.

I'm here with a man who will live 6000 years — if all goes well. He's directing a tribe of Homo sapiens *who are developing an exciting new innovation: the city.*

"Over there with the oxen!" he yells. "Yes, put the road there and the huts there!" He points at various places on the plain. "That's right." The workers scurry on.

"Excuse me."

"Speak to me. Don't waste my time. Every decade counts in this civilizing business, you know."

"I'm from Computer Gaming World *and I wondered if you could spare a few moments to tell me some tips about this 'civilizing' business?"*

He turned and gave me his full attention, no doubt impressed by my press credentials, although I'm sure he didn't recognize me without the bag over my head. "I've got a few minutes, yes. Let's talk in my palace." The palace wasn't much, just rocks piled up to look like a cave, but it was majestic compared to the thatched huts forming the city around it. Inside, we sat down to herb tea and a fermented milk by-product. I listened while the 6000-year-old man related these tips:

"Growth is your first concern and there are many ways to make a civilization grow...."

The Warlord's Way

The Warlord's way is the easiest to start with. The world is a ripe plum to be explored and conquered. Growth comes by taking the grass huts of minor tribes and the cities of your major rivals. Use your cities to build chariots, chariots and more chariots — which means you need to develop The Wheel.

Send those chariots to the four corners of your continent while your scientists cook up Map Making and Writing. Map Making will get you off your starting island and Writing will get you Diplomats. What your chariots can't overrun, trust me, those silver-tongued devils can buy.

You've got to move fast. You want to knock out as many civilizations as you



can before they get (*shudder*) Construction and start building City Walls.

If you see barbarians arriving on a sailboat, rejoice. Get your Diplomat over there lickety-split and bribe the ship's captain into joining you. That's the quickest and cheapest way to get trans-oceanic capability. And don't even think about anything but Despotism as a government choice, because that style allows military units to be organized and deployed with impunity. Remember, you're growing by conquering in the Warlord Way.

"But what if I start on an island by myself?"

Then forget about being a warlord. Try a different way. May I continue?

"Please."

Cities from the Ground Up

Back to growing: if you want to capture an enemy city intact, first try sending a Diplomat to buy it. If you can't do that, send one chariot unit per point of city size. Position them so they can all attack, using both of their attacks, on the same turn. This gives you your only chance of killing off all the defender's military units without killing off the city itself. If you attack piecemeal, he'll keep building defensive units and losing population with each of your attacks as long as there's a city left to defend.

You don't need any Wonders when using the Warlord way, but the Lighthouse is nice. It extends trireme sailing range from three to four spaces.

"But all this sounds like typical 'I want your jugular veins tangled in my canines' wargame strategy."

So it is and it's one way of playing the game. The Warlord Way declines in effectiveness when City Walls and Musketeer units show up. The defenders become so numerous and expensive that Diplomats can't buy off all the trouble, and City Walls make even cannon and catapult attacks risky. The world becomes complex and the Warlord Way becomes harder to pursue. Other strategies become more productive, such as the Wenceslaus Way.

The Wenceslaus Way

The Good King Wenceslaus Way calls for being a "nice guy" leader. You concentrate on growing through internal development of cities. You'll spent a lot of time working the city maps when you grow this way. The key units are Settlers for colonizing and improving the land around each city with roads and irrigation, and the key government form is Democracy, which promotes the fastest city growth. Finally, the key Wonder is the Pyramids. The Pyramids will let you transition to Democracy quickly and avoid long bouts with Anarchy should you misstep.

When you're pursuing the Wenceslaus Way, internal growth becomes everything. You need to manipulate your taxes and city improvements as you transition to Democracy so that your civilization experiences an unprecedented "Era of Good Feelings." Your cities need to spend a lot of time celebrating "We love the President" day. President's Day is more than just a parade, it's a time when the city experiences hypergrowth. Under a Democracy, each celebrating city grows by one population unit per turn until food supplies run out.

The Wenceslaus Way is easiest when you're on a landmass by yourself. By the way, if you start with two Settler units, don't even think about starting out the Wenceslaus Way. The two-Settler start means that rival civilizations are close at hand. You'll probably run into them in less than ten turns. Once you've cleared the land mass of rivals, then you can think about internal development again.

"So, you can fight those around you, or you can grow internally. Are there any other ways?"

Those are the basics... then there are the embellishments.

The Techno/Trader Tax Swing

There's a lot that gold can do. There's a lot that technology can do. You have to make the choice of when to support science and when to support diplomats and infrastructure building. The best answer can be to swing the tax rate wildly between science and taxes. Start with 100% science until you acquire trade, then switch to 100% tax and build

Marketplaces, then switch back to 100% science and learn how to Write, then switch back to taxes and build Libraries, and so on.

Railroads and Caravans

Once your cities have grown mighty — populations of 6 citizens or more — it's time to send out the caravans. Trade routes bring riches, but they take time to establish, and the best routes are to large cities far away.

One way to cut down on the time it takes to establish trade routes is to wait until you have a railroad net in place. The rail net lets caravans cross continents on a single move. Railroads, by the way, are a mighty trade engine themselves. They increase a square's productivity by 50%. So, as soon as you get the railroad innovation, have your settlers laying track.

If you're doing well, that large foreign city you're planning on sending caravans to may get jealously hostile. Be prepared to buy peace and learn the art of slipping in caravans from two or three squares away so they don't get attacked on the outskirts. Keep in mind that it's tough to keep people in a Democracy happy with lots of units away from home. Sending ships away will stop a President's Day celebration.

The Wonders Way

Each Wonder of the World brings a specific benefit and most make your people generally happy too. You can either home-grow your Wonders — which dovetails nicely with a Wenceslaus strategy — or you can capture cities with Wonders in them and they become yours. Doing this using outright assault requires a great deal of finesse or you destroy the city and its Wonders. If you can, try to buy the city with a Diplomat. And remember: cities come mighty cheap when you approach them during Civil Disorder.

The Technology Way

Remember too, you're here to build a civilization. If you can't overwhelm all six of your neighbors quickly, you're going to have to beat them to outer space. If that's the case, your progress is ultimately based on the advance of knowledge. You need to know a lot of things before you can build a spaceship.

That knowledge can be acquired many different ways: your own scientists can research advances, you can trade with other nations for advances, you can send a diplomat to steal them from a city, or you can conquer a city and take one as part of the loot. You can also build the Great Library Wonder: any skill known by two other civilizations will become known to you, too. But it only works until the University skill is developed.



Trading with your neighbors in the late game isn't easy. They'll be as jumpy as pit bulls on crack when your first piece of spaceship hits hard vacuum. Be prepared to give up a lot if you want peace in the late game.

"You're right. There are certainly a lot of ways. Is there anything else?"

Familiarizing Yourself With the Controls

Pay attention to your displays. They're telling you a lot. For instance, on the negotiating display: If that leader comes up with four aides behind him, he's the number one honcho on the board. Treat this man with some respect! If those aides look like they just came riding in from some Asian steppe, he's a despot. He'll go to war easily, but his units will be cheap to bribe. On the other hand, if those aids look like the Thomas Edison bunch, you're talking to the president of a Democracy and that civilization has acquired the Invention civilization skill. They're not going to provoke quite as easily, but they'll be bringing powerful units to the party when they come. If the aides look like they just wandered in from Haight-Ashbury, then the country is in Anarchy and, if you've got any money at all, your Diplomats are going to have a field day buying units and cities.

"How about the units themselves?"

The units? I could talk about them for the next decade!

The Pieces

- **Settlers**: Settler units are the infrastructure makers. They irrigate, mine and build roads. They're an expensive unit and their work takes time, but anytime you're not conducting "veins in your teeth" war campaigns, they're indispensable. The more prosperity you are planning, the more Settlers you need to improve the land around your cities. But there's a limit. These units are extracting resources from their home city each turn. Don't build too many too soon or the city won't grow.

- **Ground combat units**: There are so many! No class of unit undergoes more change and improvement as civilizing traits are acquired.

- **Diplomats**: Diplomats are wonderful units. They are mobile extensions of your treasury. In this game, every unit has its price and the diplomat unit is the way to pay it. The sweetest part is that units and cities can be bought during peacetime without antagonizing the nation they are purchased from.

A further sweetener: if units are purchased far from any of your cities, they have no home city and no city is caused unhappiness by their being away. As a Democrat you can still be popular while amassing a large "mercenary" army.

- **Ship units**: Triremes are truly a feeble ship. But because they are the first and their replacement, the sailing ship, is usually a long time coming, they are perhaps the most valuable ship you can make. The fundamental characteristics of your empire will be formed in the Age of Triremes, so learn to use them well.

- **Air units**: Your first fighter will be a joy. When I got my first I felt like Mussolini attacking the Ethiopians. The enemy knights and musketeers that were closing on my city fell like wheat to the scythe. Fighters can attack many times in a turn, bombers only once. Fighters will rip up enemy ground formations closing on your cities; bombers will carry the battle to faraway cities.

Suddenly...

There was a knock at the door.

"Excuse me sir, but the Spontaneous Palace Beautification Committee is here and we've just received a Mongol emissary."

"What, so soon? Tell the Committee to gravel the walk! Get those scientists hot-footing it on developing The Wheel, and tell the emissary I'm on my way. Go!

"Wait! How many men does he have with him?"

"I'll check."

He turned to me. "Sorry, have to rush now. I hope I've been helpful."

"You certainly have, and good luck with your negotiations."

"One last thing: remember that you can make killing fields. Your opponents have silicon minds; they are very persistent. As long as the situation they perceive doesn't change, they'll keep coming at you the same way for a long time. Find how they are getting to you and trap them."

"Sir, there are four of them."

"Four! Oh, my gosh. Bring my knee pads! There's going to be a lot of bowing and scraping today." **CGW**

Reach Out and Crush Someone

Those wishing to place their own (free) ads need only send us a postcard (or use the *Notes* section of the RID card), letter, FAX or E-Mail, etc. Generally, we run them only once, so send another to keep your name listed! The ads themselves should serve as reasonable examples as to how to write your own. However,

- Include a brief description of the types of opponents and games you are interested in playing. Games being played other than "direct by modem" *can* be listed (trading save game disks, meeting on a BBS service or even face-to-face).
- At least one (possibly more) telephone number(s) must be included. *Do not forget the area code* and mention whether they are Home, Work or Modem numbers.
- Include your city and state so that people who call you will both: a) have a clue as to what time zone you are in and b) recognize it when they see it on their phone bill.

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By Area Code

Their Finest Hour pilots are asked to share their mission experiences with Charlie K. in Washington D.C. area at 14706 Willoughby Road, Upper Marlboro, MD 20772; or call H-(301) 627-3741. No modem.

Modem opponents wanted for ***NFL Pro League Football*** and ***Falcon 3.0***. Call Randy Quintana in Denver, CO at H-(303) 973-2925

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Modem opponents wanted for ***The Perfect General***, ***Command HQ***, ***Falcon 3.0***, ***Modem Wars*** and other games. Please contact Jim Garrett in San Diego, CA at H-(619) 587-0648.

Flight simulation combat opponents wanted. I have most of the currently available simulators. If I don't have the one you want to play, *I'll get it!* I am an avid flight simulator buff and would like to meet others with a like interest. Call W.C. "Boa" Hudson in Orange, CA at H-(714) 744-5040. Please leave a message if I'm not there.

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I would like to find others to trade ***Battles of Napoleon*** scenario editor creations for the C-64. Also ***Rules of Engagement***, ***Renegade Legion: Interceptor*** and ***Breach 2*** for the Amiga. Am seeking fellow gamers who enjoy *creating* as much as they do playing! Please, contact Andy Anderson at 198 W. Pliler Precise, Longview, TX 75605; or call H-(903) 663-2120.

Networks

The Sierra Network from Sierra On-Line brings people together "just for the fun of it." For a flat fee of $11.95 per month with unlimited usage, players gather to meet and play (or watch others play and "just kibbutz" during) real-time games of cribbage, hearts, chess, checkers, backgammon and bridge (coming soon: Miniature Golf and Stellar 7). Using an interface anyone could learn with *no* instruction whatsoever and featuring the quality gamers have come to expect from Sierra, this network is worth exploring. For more information, call (800) SIERRA-1.

Attention Canadians! The **SUZY** information system has added a comprehensive play-by-mail section to their network. With Craig Russell in charge of this new section, players can play PBM games, download special software to facilitate PBM play and exchange information with other PBM gamers. For further information contact Saraka Chobot (VP of Marketing) at W-(604) 439-1311.

CompuServe is the first international information system to offer three unique services specifically for modem gamers:

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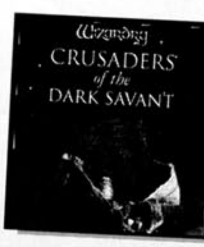
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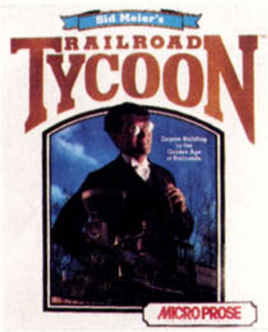
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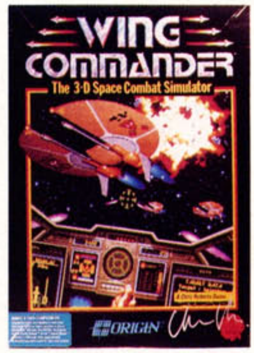
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Magazine Madness

Top Strategy







State of the Magazine: Sometimes, the task of publishing a monthly magazine can turn into a whirlwind of confusion. Couple those inexorable deadlines with a major increase in magazine size, and the potential for confusion gets even greater. Add a sprinkle of human error and the confusion increases geometrically.

When all of the above are combined with an editorial staff that strives for excellence and agonizes over every minor error, the stress level rises, some of the corrective processes that are supposed to perform error-trapping functions shut down and there comes a point of diminishing returns. The last six months of *CGW* have reflected the growing pains of a magazine that has, during the last five years, gone from a total page count of 58 pages in November of 1986 (#32) to a total of 162 pages in November of 1991 (#88). Indeed, we are averaging over 100 pages since our August issue of last year.

Such growth has been duly celebrated around **Golden Empire Publications, Inc.**, but as in many of life's experiences, it offers a double-edged sword. We may be able to publish bigger magazines with more features, but in so doing, we have increased the possibilities of error. In retrospect, the additional errors have not been proportional to the growth, **but** there have been more than our staff is comfortable with having. For instance, this editor added a late addition to his sibling's review of **U.S. Gold**'s *Murder!* (*CGW* #92), suggesting that the game offered a parlor mystery in the style of Lord Peter Wimsey. Unfortunately, the attribution for the mystery series was erroneously given to Virginia Sayers (the psychologist) instead of to Dorothy L. Sayers (the novelist). Such errors infuriate this pompous redactor and could have been caught if he had allowed more time for fact-checking.

To add insult to injury, the names of the top games dropped out of the graphs on page 49 of the same issue. This was a printer error caused by a change in the black plate, where the names were temporarily lifted to make changes to the plate and the workman forgot to replace the names. *[Art director's note: Four "process" colors, cyan, magenta, yellow and black, are used to create full-color images; there is one "plate" or piece of film for each process color used on a given page.]* Of course, we would normally have caught this error at "blue line," our final chance to catch problems, but we had run late on getting these pages to the printer and printed them *without* that final check. Again, the increase in pages has caused us embarrassment.

Any such embarrassment, however, must be considered an embarrassment of riches. The additional pages enable us to provide significantly more quality features than they cause us to "goof." It continues to be exciting to cover the world of entertainment software from the personalities and techniques behind the software to the games themselves and the strategies required to "beat" them.

In discussing such excitement, this month features three cases in point: *Railroad Tycoon*, *Wing Commander*, and *Ultima VI*. We are inducting all three into the *CGW Hall of Fame* this month. *Railroad Tycoon* is a welcome addition to the Hall of Fame as a genre-busting foray into strategy gaming. Sid Meier was able to blend the construction elements of *SimCity*, the economic elements of a solid business simulation and the joy of railroading into a coherent and comprehensive whole.

Wing Commander is also a long-awaited inductee into the Hall of Fame. The envelope-stretching action game with cinematic sequences, terraced 3-D flight model and emotive soundtrack orbited atop *CGW*'s Top 100 from the time of its inception to the time its sequel surpassed it. Chris Roberts was able to blend story, emotion and action into a creative computer space opera that became synonymous with *excitement*.

Ultima VI leapfrogged past previous *Ultimas* in terms of both story and technology. Since *Ultima IV*, Lord British has been extremely concerned with the story that undergirds each *Ultima*. *Ultima VI* both presented a parable on prejudice *and* showed how object-oriented programming could be used to create a more realistic world in which to adventure. Bugs associated with the earliest release of the game held back its initial acceptance, but it is considered a major work in its present incarnation. **CGW**

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Screen shots from Amiga version





Screen shots from Amiga version

Amiga & PC
(CGA, EGA, VGA,
TANDY, AD-LIB & ROLAND)

Screen shots are only intended to be illustrative of the game play and not the screen graphics which vary considerably between different formats in quality and appearance and are subject to the computers specifications.

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